



THE COMING OF LOVE
AND OTHER POEMS

THE COMING OF LOVE
AND OTHER POEMS BY
THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON

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PREFATORY NOTE

Had it not been for the intervention of matters of a peculiarly absorbing kind—matters which caused me to delay the task of collecting these verses—I should have been the most favoured man who ever brought out a volume of poems, for they would have been printed by William Morris, at the Kelmscott Press. As that projected edition of his was largely subscribed for, a word of explanation to the subscribers is, I am told, required from me. Among the friends who saw much of that great poet and beloved man during the last year of his life, there was one who would not and could not believe that he would die—myself. To me he seemed human vitality concentrated to a point of

quenchless light; and when the appalling truth that he must die did at last strike through me, I had no heart and no patience to think about anything in connection with him but the loss that was to come upon us. And, now, whatsoever pleasure I may feel at seeing my verses in one of Mr. Lane's inviting little volumes will be dimmed and marred by the thought that Morris's name also might have been, and is not, on the imprint.

With regard to the two chief poems in the volume, perhaps I ought to offer an explanatory word or two. The gypsies depicted in "*The Coming of Love*" belong to a peculiar class, the East Anglian and East Midland horse-dealers or "*Gryengroes*." At horse fairs no dealers are so clever as they in seeing the points of a horse, buying him at the lowest price possible, and selling him at the highest. Hence they are often as prosperous as the mongrel vagabonds and London tramps, classed as "*gypsies*" by such writers

as the late well-intentioned George Smith, of Coalville, are squalid.

With regard to "*Christmas at the Mermaid*," such liberties as I may, here and there, have taken with the history of the Jacobean period, are not such, I hope, as will vex the student. And as concerns the mysterious friend of Shakespeare, to whom so many of his sonnets were addressed, I consider that no critic has been able to identify him, and that I am entitled to imagine a *W. H.* for myself.

T. W.-D.



THE COMING OF LOVE

NATURA BENIGNA

PART I

BEFORE THE COMING OF LOVE



NATURA BENIGNA

PART I

BEFORE THE COMING OF LOVE

I

A STARRY NIGHT AT SEA

If heaven's bright halls are very far from sea,
I dread a pang the angels could not 'suage :
The imprisoned seabird knows, and only he,
How drear, how dark, may be the proudest
cage.

Outside the bars he sees a prison still :
The self-same wood or mead or silver stream
That lends the captive lark a joyous thrill
Is landscape in the seabird's prison-dream.
So might I pine on yonder starry floor

For sea-wind, deaf to all the singing spheres;
Billows like these, that never knew a shore,
Might mock mine eyes and tease my hungry
ears;

No scent of amaranth, moly, or asphodel,
In lands that bloom above yon glittering
vault,
Could soothe me if I lost this briny smell,
This living breath of Ocean, sharp and salt.

II

NATURE'S FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

(A morning swim off Guernsey with a Friend.)

As if the Spring's fresh groves should change
and shake
To dark green woods of Orient terebinth,
Then break to bloom of England's hyacinth,

So 'neath us change the waves, rising to take
Each kiss of colour from each cloud and flake
Round many a rocky hall and labyrinth,
Where sea-wrought column, arch, and granite
 plinth,
Show how the sea's fine rage dares make and
 break.
Young with the youth the sea's embrace can
 lend,
Our glowing limbs, with sun and brine
 empearled,
Seem born anew, and in your eyes, dear friend,
Rare pictures shine, like fairy flags unfurled,
Of child-land, where the roofs of rainbows
 bend
Over the magic wonders of the world.

III

THE LANGUAGE OF NATURE'S FRAGRANCY

(The Tiring-room in the Rocks.)

THESE are the "Coloured Caves" the sea-maid
built ;

Her walls are stained beyond that lonely fern,
For she must fly at every tide's return,
And all her sea-tints round the walls are
spilt.

Outside behold the bay, each headland gilt
With morning's gold ; far off the foam-
wreaths burn

Like fiery snakes, while here the sweet waves
yearn

Up sand more soft than Avon's sacred silt.
And smell the sea ! no breath of wood or
field,

From lips of may or rose or eglantine,

Comes with the language of a breath benign,
Shuts the dark room where glimmers Fate
 revealed,
Calms the vexed spirit, balms a sorrow
 unhealed,
Like scent of seaweed rich of morn and brine.

IV

LOVE BRINGS WARNING OF NATURA
MALIGNA

(THE POET sailing with a friend past the Casket Lighthouse.)

AMID the Channel's wiles and deep decoys,
Where yonder Beacons watch the siren-sea,
A girl was reared who knew nor flower nor
 tree
Nor breath of grass at dawn, yet had high
 joys:

The moving lawns whose verdure never cloy
Were hers. At last she sailed to Alderney,
But there she pined. "The bustling world,"
said she,

"Is all too full of trouble, full of noise."

The storm-child, fainting for her home, the
storm,

Had winds for sponsor—one proud rock for
nurse,

Whose granite arms, through countless years,
disperse

All billowy squadrons tide and wind can form :

The cold bright sea was hers for universe

Till o'er the waves Love flew and fanned them
warm.

But Love brings Fear with eyes of augury :—

Her lover's boat was out; her ears were
dinned

With sea-sobs warning of the awakened wind
That shook the troubled sun's red canopy.
Even while she prayed the storm's high revelry
Woke petrel, gull — all revellers winged and
finned—

And clutched a sail brown-patched and weather-
thinned,

And then a swimmer fought a white, wild sea.

“My songs are louder, child, than prayers of
thine,”

The Mother sang. “Thy sea-boy waged no strife
With Hatred's poison, gangrened Envy's
knife—

With me he strove, in deadly sport divine,
Who lend to men, to gods, an hour of life,
Then give them sleep within these arms of
mine!”

V

MOTHER CAREY'S CHICKEN

(THE POET, on seeing a storm-petrel in a cage on a cottage wall near Gypsy Dell, takes down the cage with the view of releasing the bird.)

I CANNOT brook thy gaze, beloved bird;
That sorrow is more than human in thine
eye;
Too deeply, brother, is my spirit stirred
To see thee here, beneath the landmen's
sky,
Cooped in a cage with food thou canst not
eat,
Thy "snow-flake" soiled, and soiled those
conquering feet
That walked the billows, while thy "*sweet-
sweet-sweet*"
Proclaimed the tempest nigh.

Bird whom I welcomed while the sailors cursed,
Friend whom I blessed wherever keels may
 roam,

Prince of my childish dreams, whom mermaids
 nursed

In purple of billows—silver of ocean-foam,
Abashed I stand before the mighty grief
That quells all other: Sorrow's King and
 Chief,

Who rides the wind and holds the sea in fief,
 Then finds a cage for home!

From out thy jail thou seest yon heath and
 woods,

But canst thou hear the birds or smell the
 flowers?

Ah, no! those rain-drops twinkling on the
 buds

Bring only visions of the salt sea-showers.

“The sea!” the linnets pipe from hedge and
heath ;
“The sea!” the honeysuckles whisper and
breathe,
And tumbling waves, where those wild-roses
wreathe,
Murmur from inland bowers.

These winds so soft to others—how they burn !
The mavis sings with gurgle and ripple and
plash,
To thee yon swallow seems a wheeling tern ;
And when the rain recalls the briny lash,
Old Ocean’s kiss we love. Oh, when thy sight
Is mocked with Ocean’s horses—manes of
white,
The long and shadowy flanks, the shoulders
bright—
Bright as the lightning’s flash—

When all these scents of heather and brier and
whin,

All kindly breaths of land-shrub, flower, and
vine,

Recall the sea-scents, till thy feathered skin

Tingles in answer to a dream of brine—

When thou, remembering there thy royal
birth,

Dost see between the bars a world of dearth,

Is there a grief—a grief on all the earth—

So heavy and dark as thine ?

But I can buy thy freedom—I (thank God !),

Who loved thee more than albatross or
gull—

Loved thee, and loved the waves thy footsteps
trod—

Dreamed of thee when, becalmed, we lay
a-hull—

'Tis I, thy friend, who once, a child of six,
To find where Mother Carey fed her chicks,
Climbed up the boat and then with bramble
sticks

Tried all in vain to scull—

Thy friend who shared thy Paradise of Storm—
The little dreamer of the cliffs and coves,
Who knew thy mother, saw her shadowy
form

Behind the cloudy bastions where she
moves,
And heard her call: "Come! for the welkin
thickens,
And tempests mutter and the lightning
quickens!"

Then, starting from his dream, would find the
chickens

Were daws or blue rock-doves—

Thy friend who owned another Paradise,
Of calmer air, a floating isle of fruit,
Where sang the Nereids on a breeze of spice,
While Triton, from afar, would sound
salute :

There wast thou winging, though the skies
were calm ;

For marvellous strains, as of the morning's
shalm,

Were struck by ripples round that isle of
palm

Whose shores were Ocean's lute.

And now to see thee here, my king, my king,
Far-glittering memories mirrored in those
eyes,

As if there shone within each iris-ring

An orbèd world — ocean and hills and
skies !—

Those black wings ruffled whose triumphant
sweep

Conquered in sport!—yea, up the glimmering
steep

Of highest billow, down the deepest deep,
Sported with victories!—

To see thee here!—a coil of wilted weeds

Beneath those feet that danced on diamond
spray,

Rider of sportive Ocean's reinless steeds—

Winner in Mother Carey's Sabbath-fray

When, stung by magic of the Witch's
chant,

They rise, each foamy-crested combatant—

They rise and fall and leap and foam and gallop
and pant

Till albatross, sea-swallow, and cormorant

Must flee like doves away!

And shalt thou ride no more where thou hast
ridden,

And feast no more in hyaline halls and
caves,

Master of Mother Carey's secrets hidden,

Master and monarch of the wind and waves,
Who never, save in stress of angriest blast,
Asked ship for shelter—never till at last
The foam-flakes hurled against the sloping
mast

Slashed thee like whirling glaives ?

Right home to fields no seamew ever kenned,

Where scarce the great sea-wanderer fares
with thee,

I come to take thee—nay, 'tis I, thy friend !

Ah, tremble not—I come to set thee free ;
I come to tear this cage from off this wall,
And take thee hence to that fierce festival

Where billows march and winds are musical,
Hymning the Victor-Sea !

* * * * *

Yea, lift thine eyes to mine. Dost know me
now ?

Thou'rt free ! thou'rt free ! Ah, surely a
bird can smile !

Dost know me, Petrel ? Dost remember how
I fed thee in the wake for many a mile,
Whilst thou wouldst pat the waves, then,
rising, take

The morsel up and wheel about the wake ?
Thou'rt free, thou'rt free, but for thine own
dear sake

I keep thee caged awhile.

Away to sea ! no matter where the coast :

The road that turns for home turns never
wrong ;

Where waves run high my bird will not be
lost :

His home I know : 'tis where the winds are
strong—

Where, on a throne of billows, rolling hoary
And green and blue and splashed with sunny
glory,

Far, far from shore—from farthest promon-
tory—

Prophetic Nature bares the secret of the story

That holds the spheres in song !

(THE POET, carrying the bird in the cage, turns to cross a rustic wooden bridge leading past Gypsy Dell, when he suddenly comes upon a landsman-friend of his, a "Romany Rye," who is just parting from a young Gypsy-girl, dressed in the picturesque costume of the well-to-do "Gryengroes," or horse-dealers. She is carrying in one hand a fishing-rod, and in the other an osier-wythe, upon which three or four fish are strung by the gills. With the evening sun falling upon her lustrous eyes and illuminating the rich colour of her face, the girl presents a picture of such striking beauty that THE POET stands dazzled

BEFORE THE COMING

and forgets the petrel. The bird pushes its way through the half-open door and flies away. As the two friends stand and watch the Gypsy-girl passing down the Dell, the Romany Rye relates many anecdotes of her—anecdotes which teach THE POET that the land is richer than the sea, and teach him also that, through the unsophisticated movements of the female heart, Natura Benigna can express herself.)

VI

NATURA BENIGNA REVEALED THROUGH A
GYPSY-CHILD

The Romany Rye's story of Rhona Boswell as a Child

"THE child arose and danced through frozen
dells,

Drawn by the Christmas chimes, and soon she
sate

Where, 'neath the snow around the churchyard
gate,

The ploughmen slept in bramble-banded cells :

Gentiles. The gorgios pass'd, half-fearing gypsy-spells,

While Rhona gazing seem'd to meditate ;
Then laugh'd for joy, then wept disconsolate :
' De poor dead gorgios cannot hear de bells.'
Within the church the clouds of gorgio-breath
Arose, a steam of lazy praise and prayer
To Him who weaves the loving Christmas-
stair
O'er sorrow and sin and wintry deeps of Death ;
But where stood He ? Beside our Rhona
there,
Remembering childish tears in Nazareth." *

* For this anecdote of Rhona Boswell as a child I am indebted to my friend Francis Hindes Groome, author of " In Gipsy Tents " and the Romany novel, " Kriegspiel,"

CONCLUSION OF PART I

NATURA BENIGNA

PART II

THE DAUGHTER OF THE SUNRISE

NATURA BENIGNA

PART II

THE DAUGHTER OF THE SUNRISE

I

RHONA'S FIRST KISS

(THE POET *alone* in *Rington Furze* : RHONA *has just left him.*)

If only in dreams may Man be fully blest,
Is heaven a dream ? Is she I claspt a dream ?
Or stood she here even now where dew-drops
gleam
And miles of furze shine yellow down the
West ?

I seem to clasp her still—still on my breast
Her bosom beats : I see the bright eyes beam.
I think she kiss'd these lips, for now they seem

Scarce mine: so hallow'd of the lips they
press'd.

Yon thicket's breath—can that be eglantine?
Those birds—can they be Morning's choristers?
Can this be Earth? Can these be banks of
furze?

Like burning bushes fired of God they shine!
I seem to know them, though this body of mine
Passed into spirit at the touch of hers!

II

THE GOLDEN HAND *

THE POET.

Do you forget that day on Rington strand
When, near the crumbling ruin's parapet,

* Among the Gypsies of all countries the happiest possible "Dukkeripen" (*i.e.*, prophetic symbol of *Natura Mystica*) is a hand-shaped golden cloud floating on the sky. It is singular that the same idea is found among races

I saw you stand beside the long-shore net
The gorgios spread to dry on sun-lit sand ?

RHONA.

Do I forget ?

THE POET.

You wove the wood-flowers in a dewy band
Around your hair which shone as black as
jet :

No fairy's crown of bloom was ever set
Round brows so sweet as those the wood-
flowers spanned.

I see that picture now ; hair dewy-wet :

Dark eyes that pictures in the sky expand :

entirely disconnected with them—the Finns, for instance, with whom Ukko, the "sky god" or "angel of the sunrise," was called the "golden king" and "leader of the clouds," and his Golden Hand was more powerful than all the army of Death. The "Golden Hand" is sometimes called the Lover's Dukkeripen.

Good-luck. Love-lips (with one tattoo "for dukkerin")
tanned

By sunny winds that kiss them as you stand.

RHONA.

Do I forget ?

The Golden Hand shone there : it's *you* forget,
Or p'raps us Romanies ondly understand
The way the Lovers' Dukkeripen is planned
Which shone that second time when us two met.

THE POET.

Blest "Golden Hand" !

RHONA.

The wind, that mixed the smell o' violet
Wi' chirp o' bird, a-blowin' from the land
Where my dear mammy lies, said as it fanned
My heart-like, " Them 'ere tears makes mammy
fret."

She loves to see her chavi lookin' grand, Child.
So I made what you call'd a coronet,
And in the front I put her amulet :
She sent the Hand to show she sees me yet.

THE POET.

Blest "Golden Hand" !

III

RHONA'S LOVE LETTER AFTER THE POET'S
FIRST STAY IN GYPSY DELL

Gypsy Dell, Wensdy.

THIS ere comes hoppen, leaven me the same,
And lykwise all our breed in Gypsy Dell,
Barrin the spotted gry, wot's turned up lame ; Horse.
A crick have made his orfside fetlock swell.
The Scollard's larnen me to rite and spel,
It's 'ard, but then I longed to rite your name :

Them squrruls in the Dell have grow'd that
tame!

How sweet the haycocks smel!

Faith. Dordi! how I should like you just to see
The Scollard when he's larnen me to rite,
A buzzin like a chafer or a bee,

Eyes. Else cussen you wi' bloodshot yockers bright

Mouth,
teeth. And moey girnin, danniers gleamin white.

He's wuss nor ever follerin arter me,
Peepin roun' every bush an every tree

Mornin and noon and night.

When I wur standin by the river's brim,
Birds. Hearin the chirikels in Rington wood,
And seein the moorhens larn their chicks to
swim,

Thinks I, "I hears the Scollard's heavy
thud";

And when I turned, behold ye, there he stood !

He says I promised as I'd marry him,

And if I di'n't he'd tear me limb from limb.

Sez I, "That's if you could."

But when I thinks o' you, a choon aglali,

A month
ago.

Dray mendys tan a-studyin Romany—

In our tent.

Nock, danniers, moey, yockers, canners, bal—

Nose,
teeth, mouth,
eyes, ears,
hair.

It make me sometime larf and sometime cry ;

And that make Granny's crinkles crinkle sly ;

"Dabla !" my daddy says, "de* blessed gal

Faith.

Shall lel herself a tarnow Rye she shall—

Get.
Young
gentleman.
Gypsy
gentleman.

A tarnow Romany Rye."

I lets em larf, but well I knows—too well—

The ondly tarnow Rye, and ondly man,

That in my dreams I sometime seem to lel

Get.

Ain't for the lyks o' mee in this 'ere tan,

Tent.

* The gypsies of the present generation cease, except in childhood, to say "de" for "the."

The Rye wot sat by mee where Dell-brook
 ran,

And larnt my Romany words and used to tell
 Sich sweet, strange things all day, till shadders
 fell

And light o' stars began.

Mose nights I lays awake, but when the cock
 Begin to crow and rooks begin to fly
 And chimes come livelier out o' Rington clock,
 It's then I sees your pictur in the sky
 (So plane, it seems to bring the mornin' nigh),

Hair, teeth, Bal, danniers, canners, yockers, moey,nock :
 ears, eyes,
 mouth, nose. My daddy's bort me sich a nicet new frock.

Your loving
 dark girl.

Your comly korly chy.

IV

THE POET READING THE LETTER AT
RINGTON MANOR.

THE trees awake : I hear the branches creak !
And ivy-leaves are tapping at the pane :
Dawn draws across the grey a saffron streak,
To let me read at sunrise once again
Beautiful Rhona's letter, which has lain,
Balming the pillow underneath my cheek,
While in the dark her writing seemed to speak :
Her great eyes lit my brain.

I felt the paper—felt her thumb's device
That stamped the wax ; I seemed to feel the
fingers
Which wrote these misspelt words of rarer price
Than songs of bards I worshipped as the
bringers

Of light from shores where spherical music
lingers,

Till came this girl, whose music could entice
My soul to that diviner Paradise

Where lovers are the singers—

That Paradise which Rhona can transfer
From Eden to the tents of Gypsy Dell,
Where Love is still his own orthographer
As when on scripted leaves of asphodel
He taught his earliest pupil, Eve, to spell—
Where Love speaks out what makes his bosom
stir

Frankly as yonder woodland chorister,
Whose first notes rise and swell.

V

EVENING ON THE RIVER

THE POET AND RHONA.

MORE mellow falls the light and still more
mellow

Around the boat, as we two glide along

'Tween grassy banks she loves where, tall and
strong,

The buttercups stand gleaming, smiling, yellow.

She knows the nightingales of "Portobello ;"

Love makes her know each bird ! In all that
throng

No voice seems like another : soul is song,

And never nightingale was like its fellow ;

For, whether born in breast of Love's own bird,

Singing its passion in those islet-bowers

Whose sunset-coloured maze of leaves and
flowers

The rosy river's glowing arms engird,
Or born in human souls—twin souls like
ours—
Song leaps from deeps unplumbed by spoken
word.

VI

THE NATURE WORSHIPPER AND WOMAN'S
WITCHERY

*(THE POET walking along the river-side near Gypsy Dell
at break of day.)*

LOVE knows a wrong no tears can ever atone :
A word can break the web of Passion's spell,
And then away the enchanted woof is blown
That made a faery world of wood and dell :
But direr than all direst words are deeds :—
Can I, who saw her body shake and sway
Before a storm of rage, like yonder reeds

When March winds bend them o'er the water-
weeds—

Can I forgive that wrong of yesterday?—

Can I, who saw the lips of this wild girl,
So loving once, shrink back till pearly teeth,
That once seemed lovelier than the morning's
pearl,

Flashed bright as that bright blade she dared
unsheathe—

Can I, who saw a brow, a throbbing throat
Glassed in the stream beneath the willow tree,
As up she sprang, a tigress, in the boat—
Can I forgive her, though the siren wrote
The loveliest letter in the world to me?

*(He comes upon a second letter from RHONA lying on the
grass, and stands looking at it with yearning eyes, but
afraid to pick it up.)*

Another letter! Ah, full well I know
Those characters so childish, big, and round:

I think she watches where the hawthorns throw
Those shortening shadows on the dewy ground.
Ah yes! that head which gleams by yonder
bush,
Where golden shafts from out the quiver of
morn
Pierce the wet leaves and wake the hidden
thrush—

That cheek which seems to lend a lovelier blush
To blushing may-buds on the dew-bright thorn!

(He takes up the letter and reads it aloud.)

THE LETTER.

This time you can't forgive me—*that* I know—
But when I'm dead o' cryin and in the groun,
You'll come, afore my grass has time to grow,
And say, "That's hern; the clods is fresh and
brown.

Lord, how I misses her in puv and tan,"

You'll say, "that gal wot axed me to forgive
her!

It druv her mad to see me kis my han
And smile so sweet — pore Rhona's ondly
man!—

To that fine rawni rowin on the river. Lady.

Pore gal," you'll say, "she never touched her
knife,

Leaseways, just touched the handel so," you'll
say;

"She'd never ha' drawed: she wur to bee my
wife,

And loved me, loved me, loved me night and
day.

What made the chi," you'll say, "start from the Girl.
seat?

What made her flesh goo hot and cold and
shiver

Right down her back-like—yis, from hed to
feet ?

She seed me kis my han and smile so swete
To that fine rawni rowin on the river.

The Dell," you'll say, "do seem that dul and
sad ;

It dreems o' one wot loved me body and soul,
And loved me most that day I druv her madd

Poor heart. And turned her choori zee to burnin coal ;

Birds. The
birds attend
the funeral
of a true
Romany
maid.

The chiriklos 'ull chirp ' He should ha' gien
All them sweet smiles—yis, all he had to give
her—

To her we buried with her Romany kin,
And laid wi' clods all round her eyes an' chin,
Through that fine rawni rowin on the river.' "

You'll say, " Instead o' havin Jasper's gal,
So spry at snare and rod and landin net,

This teeny clisson from her korley bal

Is all, and that'll ondly make me fret.

I'd sooner fish wi' her where swallows fan

The brook," you'll say, "where water creases
quiver,

Lock from
her dark
hair. Clisson
really means
a lock for a
key.

Tryin to hide the trouts, but never can,

Than smile so sweet and look and kis my han

To that fine rawni rowin on the river.

'Twur here," you'll say, "where many and
many a night

We stayed a-settin snares in Gypsy Dell

Beneath the stars, or when the moon wur
bright,

Till 'twitter' came the arliest chirikel,

Bird.

And larks the sunshine turned to specks o' gold

Flew whistlin up, but none as could deliver

A tale o' love like that as then wur told

By that pore Rhona, her wot's dead and cold.'

THE POET.

The witching rogue ! But still I can't forgive
her.

THE LETTER CONTINUED.

Two months ago. " 'Twur here," you'll say, " 'twur here, dooey

choons aglal,

Tent. Out o' her daddy's tan one night there crep'

Handsome. A gal to meet me—sich a rinkeni gal—

Though well she knowed the watch the Scol-
lard kep' :

She stayed wi' me till all the eastern sky

Biled, steamed, and broke to many a fiery slivver

Field and
tent and
sleeping
horse.

That lit up puv and tan and sooterin grei " :

You'll seem to feel her lips—

RHONA.

*(Advancing from the bush, watching him as he reads,
then rushing towards him, covering his eyes with her
hands, and pulling down his head and kissing him.)*

These lips, my Rye !

THE POET.

These lips, indeed ! Ah ! who would not forgive her ?

RHONA.

Lips as 'ud turn to clods without you, dear !

THE POET.

But how this loving Rhona tries my love !

RHONA.

And yet she'd walk the world barefoot to hear

Them words o' yourn in tan or vesh or puv— Tent, wood,
field.

Yis, walk and never know her feet wur sore

To hear you say, "Ah ! who would not forgive
her ?"

THE POET.

But that young lady ?

RHONA.

Her what flicks her oar ?

THE POET.

The same.

RHONA.

You'll never kiss your han no more
To that fine rawni rowin on the river ?

VII

OCEAN-SORCERY

(THE POET *on the deck of "The Petrel" after he has
been separated from RHONA.*)

Was it indeed but two sweet years ago
When once a sailor on a star-lit sea
Babbled about its spell, and did not know
How Love makes Nature breathe her poesy ?
When did the sea-spell vanish ? On that day
When his beloved petrel flew away.
But as for them who bade him, made him, come,

Though love had crowned him man, to thee,
wild Ocean,
Prated of some nepenthe in thy foam
To quell his love as by a magic potion—
Some anodyne within thy billowy swirl
To soothe the body—make the soul forget
Its guileless passion for a “guileful girl”
Whose beauty caught him in a “Gypsy
net”—
They should be here to see these billows
heaving
Beneath yon Southern Cross that holds the
sky,
They should be here to see how thou art
weaving
Pictures of home by ocean-sorcery!
A dingle's fragrance breathed from every
billow,
Sweeter than Orient frankincense and myrrh—

A slim girl-angler shown beneath a willow,
Leaning against its mossy bole for pillow,
Must needs recall his every thought to her !

VIII

THE MUSIC OF NATURA MYSTICA

(THE POET on board "*The Petrel*" in the Pacific,
cruising among coral islands.)

LAST Sunday morn I thought this azure isle
Was dreaming mine own dream ; each bower
of balm

That spiced the rich Pacific, every palm,
Smiled with the dream that lends my life its
smile.

" These waves," I said, " lapping the coral pile
Make music like a well-remembered psalm :
Surely an English Sunday, breathing calm,
Broods in each tropic dell, each flowery aisle."

The heav'ns were dreaming, too, of English
skies :

Upon the blue, within a belt of grey,
A well-known spire was pictured far away ;
And then I heard a psalm begin to rise,
And saw a dingle—smelt its new-mown hay
Where we two loitered—loitered lover-wise.

IX

LOVE'S CALENTURE

(THE POET on board "*The Petrel*" in a tropic calm.)

I HEAR our blackbirds singing in our grove,
And now I see—I smell—the eglantine—
The meadow-sweet where rivulets laugh and
shine
To English clouds that laugh and shine above ;
I feel a stream of maiden-music move,

Pouring through all my frame a life divine
From Rhona's throbbing bosom claspt to
mine—
From that dear harp, her heart, whose chords
are love !

Vanished !—

O God ! a blazing world of sea—
A blistered deck—an engine's grinding jar—
Hot scents of scorching oil and paint and tar—
And, in the offing up yon fiery lee,
One spot in the air no bigger than a bee—
A frigate-bird that sails alone afar !

*(He takes from his pocket and reads a letter from RHONA
which reached him in Australia.)*

THE LETTER.

On Christmas-eve I seed in dreams the day
When Herne the Scollard comed and said to
me,

' He's off, that rye o' yourn, gone clean away Gentleman.

Till swallow-time; he's left this letter : see."

In dreams I heerd the bee and grasshopper,

Like on that mornin, buz in Rington Hollow,

"She'll live till swallow-time and then she'll

mer,

Die.

For never will a rye come back to her

Gentleman.

Wot leaves her till the comin o' the swallow."

All night I heerd them bees and grasshoppers ;

All night I smelt the breath o' grass and may,

Mixed sweet wi' smells o' honey from the

furze,

Like on that mornin' when you went away ;

All night I heerd in dreams my daddy sal

Laugh.

Sayin, " De blessed chi ud give de chollo

Girl, Whole.

O' Bozzle's breed—tans, vardey, greis, and all—

Tents,
waggon,
horses.

To see dat tarno rye o' hern palall

Back.

Wot's left her till the comin o' the swallow."

I woke and went a-walkin on the ice
All white with snow-dust, just like sparklin
Salt. loon,
And soon beneath the stars I heerd a v'ice,
Hear. A v'ice I knowed and often, often shoon ;
Smoke. And then I seed a shape as thin as tuv ;
Spirit. I knowed it wur my blessed mammy's mollo.*
" Rhona," she sez, " that tarno rye you love,
Weep. He's thinkin on you ; don't you go and rove ;
You'll see him at the comin o' the swallow."

Sez she, " For you it seemed to kill the grass
When he wur gone, and freeze the brooklets'
Songs. gillies ;
Hay. There worn't no smell, dear, in the sweetest cas,
And when the summer brought the water-lilies,
Wheat. And when the sweet winds waved the golden giv,

* Mostly pronounced " mullo," but sometimes in the East Midlands " mollo."

The skies above 'em seemed as bleak and
kollo *

Black.

As now, when all the world seems frozen yiv. Snow.

The months are long, but mammy says you'll
live

By thinkin o' the comin o' the swallow."

She sez, "The whinchat soon wi' silver throat
Will meet the stonechat in the buddin whin,
And soon the blackcap's airliest gillie 'ull float Song.
From light-green boughs through leaves a-peepin
thin ;

The wheat-ear soon 'ull bring the willow-wren,
And then the fust fond nightingale 'ull follow,
A-callin 'Come, dear,' to his laggin hen
Still out at sea, 'the spring is in our glen ;
Come, darlin, wi' the comin o' the swallow.'"

* Mostly pronounced "kaulo," but sometimes in the
East Midlands "kollo."

And she wur gone ! And then I read the words
In mornin twilight wot you rote to me ;
They made the Christmas sing with summer
birds,

And spring-leaves shine on every frozen tree ;
And when the dawnin kindled Rington spire,
And curdlin winter-clouds burnt gold and lollo
Round the dear sun, wot seemed a yolk o' fire,
" Another night," I sez, " has brought him
nigher ;
He's comin wi' the comin o' the swallow."

And soon the bull-pups found me on the Pool—
You know the way they barks to see me slide—
But when the skatin bors o' Rington scool
Comed on, it turned my head to see 'em glide.
I seemed to see you twirlin on your skates,
And somethin made me clap my hans and hollo ;

Cutting. " It's him," I sez, " a-chinnin o' them 8s."

But when I woke-like—"I'm the gal wot waits
Alone," I sez, "the comin o' the swallow."

"Comin" seemed ringin in the Christmas-
chime;

"Comin" seemed rit on everything I seed,
In beads o' frost along the nets o' rime,
Sparklin on every frozen rush and reed;
And when the pups began to bark and play,
And frisk and scrabble and bite my frock and
wallow

Among the snow and fling it up like spray,
I says to them, "You know who rote to say
He's comin wi' the comin o' the swallow.

The thought on't makes the snow-drifts o'
December

Shine gold," I sez, "like daffodils o' spring
Wot wait beneath: he's comin, pups, remember;
If not—for me no singin birds 'ull sing:

Cuckoo. No choring chiriklo 'ull hold the gale
 Wi' 'Cuckoo, cuckoo,'* over hill and hollow :
 There'll be no crakin o' the meadow-rail,
 There'll be no 'Jug-jug' o' the nightingale,
 For her wot waits the ccomin o' the swallow.

Mine own. Come back, minaw, and you may kiss your han
 Lady. To that fine rawni rowin on the river ;
 Witch. I'll never call that lady a chovihan,
 Miserable Nor yit a mumply gorgie—I'll forgive her.
 gentle. Come back, minaw : I wur to be your wife.
 Come back—or, say the word, and I will follow
 Your footfalls round the world : I'll leave this
 life
 (I've flung away a-ready that 'ere knife)—
 I'm dyin for the comin o' the swallow."

* The gypsies are great observers of the cuckoo, and call certain Spring winds "cuckoo storms," because they bring over the cuckoo earlier than usual.

X

THE FIRST DUKKERIPEN OF THE STARS

(THE POET on the night of his return to the encampment lingers before calling for the ferry-boat upon the tongue of land called Portobello, and looks down the river, where the stars are brilliantly reflected. RHONA, who has secretly come to meet him, appears on the opposite bank, but does not perceive him, owing to the shadowing trees under which he stands.)

THE POET.

WHAT sees she in the river as it flows ?

Does she recall that summer night when we
Rowed here beneath the stars—the night
when she,

Unconscious, then, of that within my breast
Which held me mute, murmured in loving
jest,

“ Our Tarno Rye, he’s dreamin while he rows ” ? Young
gentleman.

Or is she gazing at the stars that shine
Mirrored within the stream to read their
sign—

Nature's
prophetic
symbol.

The dukkeripen of good or evil made
By their reflections mingled with the shade
Yon pollard willow throws ?

That night I murmured, " Life's one joy is this,
To love, to taste the soul's divine delight
Of loving some most lovely soul or sight—
To worship still, though never an answering
sign
Should come from Love asleep within the
shrine."

That night I said, " I ask no more of bliss
Than—while beneath the boat the wavelets
heave—
To touch the gauds upon a gypsy's sleeve,
To see the bright nails shine on glistening
fingers,
To see the throat on which the starlight lingers,
The mouth I dare not kiss."

But that same night Love wrote around the
prow

In stars ! Her trembling body turned to me

In joyful fear of joy, and I could see,

Pictured in frightened eyes, the blissful things

A girl's pure soul can see when Love's young

wings,

Fragrant of heaven and earth, fan first the brow.

*

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(RHONA gives a sudden start and looks behind her.)

What means that start ? Why stands she

there to listen ?

I see her eyes that in the starlight glisten—

Her eyes—but not the thing of dread they

see :

She's feeling where her knife was wont to

be—

Ah, would she wore it now !

("The Scollard's" figure appears from behind the willow.)

'Tis he, my gypsy rival, by her side !

He lifts a knife. She springs, the dauntless
girl,

Lithe as a leopardess ! Ah ! can she hurl

The giant down the bank ?

(He prepares to plunge into the river in order to swim to her, when RHONA meets the onrush of her assailant with a blow in the mouth from her fist, which causes him to totter and then stumble over the bank.)

He falls below,

Falls where the river's darkest waters flow !

Twice, thrice, he rises—sinks beneath the tide !

Only the stars and I have seen him fall.

Gypsy. Death is her doom who slays a Romany-chal

Gentile. And weds a gorgio : death ! But only we,

The stars and I who love the slayer, could see
The way the ruffian died.

(He looks in the river, where the reflected stars make mysterious figures as the ripples twist round the bulrushes.)

'Twas only we who saw, ye starry throng !

And one white lie of mine will hide the
deed

Of her who gave me love against her
creed—

The Romany woman's creed of tribal duty—
Gave Rhona's wealth of love and faith and
beauty.

THE STARS WRITE IN THE RIVER.

Falsehood can never shield her : Truth is strong.

THE POET.

I read your rune : is there no pity, then,
In Heav'n that wove this net of life for men ?
Have only Hell and Falsehood heart for
ruth ?

Show me, ye mirrored stars, this tyrant
Truth—

King that can do no wrong !

Ah! Night seems opening! There, above the
skies,

Who sits upon that central sun for throne
Round which a golden sand of worlds is
strown,

Stretching right onward to an endless
ocean,

Far, far away, of living dazzling motion?
Hearken, King Truth with pictures in thine
eyes

Mirrored from gates beyond the furthest
portal

Of infinite light, 'tis Love that stands
immortal,

The King of Kings. And there on yonder
bank

Stands she, and, where the accursed carrion
sank,

The merry bubbles rise!

At last she sees me on this tongue of
land ;

She plunges through the fringe of reed and
moss,

She takes the boat ; she's pulling straight
across,

Startling the moorhens as the dark prow
brushes

Through reeds and weeds and water-flags
and rushes.

*

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Yes, yes, I saw ! Is this the little hand

That slew him ? How the slender fingers
quiver

Against my lips ! Those stars within the
river

May write of how he died, but Love, my
darling,

Looks straight at Doom, though wolves of
Death are snarling,
And smiles : " Behold, I stand ! "

XI

THE PROMISE OF THE SUNRISE

(THE POET *in the tent on the morning after his marriage*
with RHONA in Gypsy Dell.)

THE young light peeps through yonder trembling
chink

The tent's mouth makes in answer to a
breeze ;

The rooks outside are stirring in the trees
Thro' which I see the deepening bars of pink.
I hear the earliest anvil's tingling clink
From Jasper's forge ; the cattle on the leas
Begin to low. She's waking by degrees :
Sleep's rosy fetters melt, but link by link.

What dream is hers ? Her eyelids shake with
tears ;

The fond eyes open now like flowers in dew :
She sobs I know not what of passionate fears :
“ You’ll never leave me now ? There is but
you ;

I dreamt a voice was whispering in my ears,
‘ The Dukkeripen o’ stars comes ever true.’ ”

She rises, startled by a wandering bee
Buzzing around her brow to greet the girl :
She draws the tent wide open with a swirl,
And, as she stands to breathe the fragrancy
Beneath the branches of the hawthorn tree—
Whose dewes fall on her head like beads of pearl
Or drops of sunshine firing tress and curl—
The Spirit of the Sunrise speaks to me,
And says, “ This bride of yours, I know her well,
And so do all the birds in all the bowers

Who mix their music with the breath of flowers
When greetings rise from river, heath and dell.
See, on the curtain of the morning haze
The Future's finger writes of happy days."

XII

THE MIRRORED STARS AGAIN

(After only six months with her.)

THE mirrored stars lit all the bulrush-spears,
And all the flags and broad-leaved lily-isles ;
The ripples shook the stars to golden smiles,
Then smoothed them back to happy golden
spheres.

We rowed—we sang ; her voice seemed in mine
ears

An angel's, yet with woman's dearer wiles ;
But shadows fell from gathering cloudy piles
And ripples shook the stars to fiery tears.

What shaped those shadows like another boat
Where Rhona sat and he Love made a liar ?
There, where the Scollard sank, I saw it float,
While ripples shook the stars to symbols dire ;
We wept—we kissed—while starry fingers
wrote,
And ripples shook the stars to a snake of fire.

XIII

THE PROMISE OF THE SUNRISE RENEWED

(THE POET, on the anniversary of the mysterious disappearance of RHONA, stands in the mouth of his solitary tent in Gypsy Dell. He looks towards the spire of Rington Church in the distance, over which the dawn is gradually brightening into a gorgeous sunrise.)

DEATH's year has passed: again the new-
mown hay,
As on that night, perfumes the Dell—that
night

Whose darkness seemed more dear than
Eden-light—

Fragrant of Love's warm wings and Love's
warm breath—

Where here I left her doomed to treacherous
death

By Romany guile that lured me far away ;

'Twas here—where petals of the morn are
cast

'Mid Night's wild phantoms from the spec-
tral past—

'Twas here she made the vow I smiled at then
To show her face some morn when hill and
glen

Took the first kiss of Day.

But now—not all the starry Virtues seven

Seem strong as she, nor Time, nor Death, nor
Night.

And morning says, "Love hath such godlike
might

That if the sun, the moon, and all the stars,
Nay, all the spheral spirits who guide their
cars,

Were quelled by Doom, Love's high-creative
leaven

Could light new worlds." If, then, this Lord
of Fate,

'When Death calls in the stars, can re-create,
Is it a madman's dream that Love can show
Rhona, my Rhona, in yon ruby glow,

And build again my heaven ?

"The birds," she said, "they knows us Romany Gypsy girls.
chies—

Leaseways the gypsy-magpie an the jay—

Water-
wagtail.

They knows the Romany tongue—yis, all we
say :

So, if the Hernes should do away wi' me
'Cause o' the Scollard's death, the birds will
see

An' tell the flowers where Rhona's body lies.

The Scollard's strong to strive wi' now he's
dead :

Outside the tent o' nights I hear his tread.

You mind them stars a-shinin in the river

That seemed a snake o' fire ? I see'd you
shiver :

It had the Scollard's eyes !

But when I'm dead, the Golden Hand o' Love
Will shine some day where mists o' mornin
swim ;

Me too you'll see, dear, when the sun's red
rim

Peeps through the Rookery boughs by
Rington spire,

And makes the wet leaves wink like stars o'
fire ;

Then, when the skylark wakes the thrush and
dove,

An' squirrels jump, an' rabbits scrabble roun',
An' hares cock up their ears a-shinin brown,
An' grass an' blossoms mix their mornin
smells

Wi' Dingle songs from all the chirikels, Birds.
You'll see me there above."

*

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I think 'twas here—though now I know not
whether

Dead joy or living sorrow be the dream—

In this same tent—round which the branches
seem

To stir their whispering leaves as if to tell

The morn the dreadful secret of the Dell—

I think 'twas here we lived that life together.

(A shape that at one moment seems like a hand, and then a feather of gold, appears in the eastern clouds near the brightening wings of the Spirit of the Sunrise.)

My senses mock me : these mad eyes behold
What seems a hand, a mystic hand of gold,
Traced on the steaming canvas of the mist,
Gilding the woof of pearl and amethyst—
A hand or golden feather.

(Beside the Golden Hand RHONA's face appears.)

Is that a picture in a madman's eye ?
Or is it Memory, like a mocking elf,
Weaving Hope's tapestry to cheat herself ?
Or does great Nature, she who garners all
The fleeting pictures Time can limn, recall
The face of her the Romanies doomed to die ?
Or is there glowing a face from brow to chin
Where yonder wings of morn are widening
thin,

Her very face, her throat, her dimpling cheek,
Her mouth—the mouth that love first taught
to speak—

Smiling, “ ’Tis I, ’tis I ” ?

THE LARK RISING FROM THE HAY-FIELD.

Birds of the Dell, the veils of morn are shaking !

And see the face of her, ye loving birds,

Who knew your songs — who gave them
human words

In those sweet mornings when her breath
would mingle

With breath of flowers, and all the dewy
Dingle

Greeted the Spirit of the Sunrise waking ;

Ye birds who saw her buried—ye who know

But cannot utter where she lies below—

Can never tell yon mourner, for the spell

The monstrous deed hath cast about the
Dell—

The man whose heart is breaking !

THE BIRDS OF THE DINGLE.

She keeps her promise, she who made the vow
No Romany law, no Romany guile, should
ever

Divide their lives, nor Death's fell malice sever
The chain the sunrise forged 'twixt her and
him ;

She keeps her promise : see, through mists
that swim,

Those eyes are hers—that brow is Rhona's
brow—

Symbol.

Rhona's, who vowed to show the dukkeripen
Of Hope, the Golden Hand of promise,
when

Fate should fulfil the prophet - river's
warning—

Vowed she would gaze from ruby domes of
morning ;

She keeps her promise now.

THE SPIRIT OF THE SUNRISE.

Though Love be mocked by Death's obscene
derision,

Love still is Nature's truth and Death her
lie ;

Yet hard it is to see the dear flesh die,

To taste the fell destroyer's crowning spite

That blasts the soul with life's most cruel
sight,

Corruption's hand at work in Life's transition :

This sight was spared thee : thou shalt still
retain

Her body's image pictured in thy brain ;

The flowers above her weave the only shroud
Thine eye shall see : no stain of Death shall
cloud

Rhona ! Behold the vision !

THE POET.

As on that morn when round our bridal pillow
The sunrise came and you cried : "Smell
the whin !"
And oped the tent to let the fragrance in,
Yon clouds—like molten metal, boiling brass,
Brightening to gold—are crested as they
pass
With Love's own fire !—And while each
gleaming billow
Rolls o'er the Dell, 'tis Love's own hand that
launches
The self-same promise through the self-same
branches—

The promise of the Sunrise!—Oak and ash
And birch and elm and thorn pass on the
flash

Down to the river-willow !

* * * * *

XVI

NATURA MALIGNA

(THE POET, in Norway, and afterwards in the Alps, whither he has gone to escape the haunting effect of English scenery upon his mind, has, after living alone in a log-hut, passed into a state of spiritual exaltation, and has come to look upon Nature with the puritanical eyes of a Hindoo Saivite, as being the malignant foe of Man. And yet the dominant thought drives him to go every morning to watch for a sign at sunrise.)

THE Lady of the Hills with crimes untold
Followed my feet with azure eyes of prey ;
By glacier-brink she stood—by cataract-spray—
When mists were dire, or avalanche-echoes
rolled.

At night she glimmered in the death-wind
cold,

And if a footprint shone at break of day,
My flesh would quail, but straight my soul
would say :

“ 'Tis hers whose hand God's mightier hand
doth hold.”

I trod her snow-bridge, for the moon was
bright,

Her icicle-arch across the sheer crevasse,
When lo, she stood ! God made her let
me pass,

Then felled the bridge ! Oh, there in
sallow light,

There down the chasm, I saw her cruel, white,
And all my wondrous days as in a glass.

XVII

THE PROMISE AGAIN RENEWED

(The Dream in the hut.)

BENEATH the loveliest dream there coils a fear :
Last night came she whose eyes are memories
now ;

Her far-off gaze seemed all forgetful how
Love dimmed them once, so calm they shone
and clear.

"Sorrow," I said, "has made me old, my
dear ;

'Tis I, indeed, but grief can change the brow :
Beneath *my* load a seraph's neck might bow,
Vigils like mine would blanch an angel's hair."
Oh, then I saw, I saw the sweet lips move !
I saw the love-mists thickening in her eyes—
I heard a sound as if a murmuring dove
Felt lonely in the dells of Paradise ;

But when upon my neck she fell, my love,
 Her hair smelt sweet of whin and woodland
 spice.

* * * * *
 * * * * *

XX

NATURA BENIGNA

*(The promise of the sunrise on the morning after the
 marvellous sight in the sunbow above the cataract.)*

WHAT power is this ? what witchery wins my
 feet

To peaks so sheer they scorn the cloaking snow,
 All silent as the emerald gulfs below,
 Down whose ice-walls the wings of twilight
 beat ?

What thrill of earth and heaven—most wild,
 most sweet—

What answering pulse that all the senses know,

Comes leaping from the ruddy eastern glow
Where, far away, the skies and mountains
meet ?

Mother, 'tis I reborn : I know thee well :
That throb I know and all its prophecies,
O Mother and Queen, beneath the olden spell
Of silence, gazing from thy hills and skies !
Dumb Mother, struggling with the years to tell
The secret at thy heart through helpless eyes.

CHRISTMAS AT THE
MERMAID

CHRISTMAS AT THE MERMAID

(With the exception of Shakspeare, who has quitted London for good, in order to reside at New Place, Stratford-on-Avon, which he has lately rebuilt, all the members of the Mermaid Club are assembled at the Mermaid Tavern. At the head of the table sits Ben Jonson dealing out the wassail from a large bowl. At the other end sits Raleigh, and at Raleigh's right hand the guest he has brought with him, a stranger, David Gwynn, the Welsh seaman, now an elderly man, whose story of his exploits as a galley-slave in crippling the Armada before it reached the Channel had, years before, whether true or false, given him in the Low Countries a great reputation, the echo of which had reached England. Raleigh's desire was to excite the public enthusiasm for continuing the struggle with Spain on the sea, and generally to revive the fine Elizabethan temper, which had already become almost a thing of the past, save, perhaps, among such choice spirits as those associated with the Mermaid Club.)

CHORUS.

CHRISTMAS knows a merry, merry place,
Where he goes with fondest face,
Brightest eye, brightest hair :
Tell the Mermaid where is that one place :
Where ?

BEN JONSON.

(After filling each cup with wassail.)

Drink first to Stratford Will—belovèd man,
So generous, honest, open, brave and free,
Who merriest at the Apollo used to be—
Merriest of all the merry Falcon clan.

(All drink to "Will Shakspeare.")

CHORUS.

Christmas knows a merry, merry place,
Where he goes with fondest face,
Brightest eye, brightest hair :

Tell the Mermaid where is that one place :

Where ?

BEN JONSON.

That he, the star of revel, bright-eyed Will,
With life at golden summit, fled the town
And took from Thames that light to dwindle
down

O'er Stratford farms, doth make me marvel still.

But, tho' we feast without the king to-night,
The Monarch leaves a regent—friend of friends,
With whose own soul the thronèd spirit
blends

In one fair flame of love's commingling light.

Brother of Shakspeare, wilt thou not rehearse
Those sugared sonnets thy shy muse hath
made,

Those lines where Avon, glassing wood and
glade,
Seems rippling through the sunshine of thy
verse ?

Wilt thou not tell the Mermaid once again,
In golden numbers, what the poet told,
Of how his spirit ever was controlled
By Avon-ripples shining in his brain,

And how those ripples greeted him that day,
Which was the Mermaid's night, when he
the Swan

Flew to the bosom he was nursed upon—
The bosom he so loved when far away ?

Wilt thou not tell us how the river spake
To that sweet Swan returning to its nest
Among the lilies dreaming on the breast
Of Avon, dear to us for Shakspeare's sake ?

CHORUS.

Christmas knows a merry, merry place,
Where he goes with fondest face,
Brightest eye, brightest hair:
Tell the Mermaid where is that one place:
Where ?

“MR. W. H.”

To sing the nation's song or do the deed
That crowns with richer light the motherland,
Or lend her strength of arm in hour of need
When fangs of foes shine fierce on every hand,
Is joy to him whose joy is working well—
Is goal and guerdon too, though never fame
Should find a thrill of music in his name ;
Yea, goal and guerdon too, though Scorn
should aim
Her arrows at his soul's high citadel.

But if the fates withhold the joy from me
To do the deed that widens England's day,
Or join that song of Freedom's jubilee
Begun when England started on her way—
Withhold from me the hero's glorious power
To strike with song or sword for her, the
 mother,

And give that sacred guerdon to another,
Him will I hail as my more noble brother—
Him will I love for his diviner dower.

Enough for me who have our Shakspeare's love
To see a poet win the poet's goal,
For Will is he ; enough and far above
All other prizes to make rich my soul.
Ben names my numbers golden. Since they
 tell

A tale of him who in his peerless prime
Fled us ere yet one shadowy film of time

Could dim the lustre of that brow sublime,
Golden my numbers are : Ben praiseth well.

THE EVENING AFTER WILL'S RETURN TO
STRATFORD-ON-AVON

As down the bank he strolled through evening
dew,

Pictures (he told me) of remembered eves
Mixt with that dream the Avon ever weaves,
And all his happy childhood came to view ;
He saw a child watching the birds that flew
Above a willow, through whose musky leaves
A green musk-beetle shone with mail and
greaves

That shifted in the light to bronze and blue.
These dreams, said he, were born of fragrance
falling

From trees he loved, the scent of musk recalling,

With power beyond all power of things beholden
Or things reheard, those days when elves of
dusk

Came, veiled the wings of evening feathered
golden,

And closed him in from all but willow musk.

And then a child beneath a silver willow—

A child who loved the swans, the moorhens'

“cheep”—

Angled for bream where river holes were
deep—

For gudgeon where the water glittered shallow,

Or ate the “fairy cheeses” of the mallow,

And wild fruits gathered where the wavelets
creep

Round that loved church whose shadow seems
to sleep

In love upon the stream and bless and hallow ;

And then a child to whom the water-fairies
Sent fish to "bite" from Avon's holes and
shelves,

A child to whom, from richest honey-dairies,
The flower-sprites sent the bees and "sun-
shine elves ;"

Then, in the shifting vision's sweet vagaries,
He saw two lovers walking by themselves—

Walking beneath the trees, where drops of rain
Wove crowns of sunlit opal to decoy
Young love from home ; and one, the happy
boy,

Knew all the thoughts of birds in every strain—
Knew why the cushat breaks his fond refrain
By sudden silence, "lest his plaint should
cloy"—

Knew when the skylark's changing note of joy
Saith, "Now will I return to earth again"—

Knew every warning of the blackbird's shriek,
And every promise of his joyful song—
Knew what the magpie's chuckle fain would
speak ;

And, when a silent cuckoo flew along,
Bearing an egg in her felonious beak,
Knew every nest threatened with grievous
wrong.

He heard her say, "The birds attest our
troth !

Hark to the mavis, Will, in yonder may
Fringing the sward, where many a hawthorn
spray

Round summer's royal field of golden cloth
Shines o'er the buttercups like snowy froth,
And that sweet skylark on his azure way,
And that wise cuckoo, hark to what they say :
'We birds of Avon heard and bless you both.'

And, Will, the sunrise, flushing with its glory
River and church, grows rosier with our story !
This breeze of morn, sweetheart, which moves
 caressing,
Hath told the flowers ; they wake to lovelier
 growth !
They breathe—o'er mead and stream they
 breathe—the blessing,
' We flowers of Avon heard and bless you
 both ! ' "

A FRIEND OF MARLOWE'S.

(Who has been sitting moody and silent.)

'Tis when the Christmas joy-bells fill the air
That memory comes with half-reproachful
 eyes
To hold before the soul its legacies,
Of grief and joy from Christmas-songs that were.

Friends, friends, there come to me, I know not
why,

The words I wrote that day my Kit was
slain.

I would not chill this feast, yet am I fain
To tell of Kit and how I saw him die.

ON SEEING KIT MARLOWE SLAIN
AT DEPTFORD

'Tis Marlowe falls! That last lunge rent
asunder

Our lyre of spirit and flesh, Kit Marlowe's
life,

Whose chords seemed strung by earth and
heav'n at strife,

Yet ever strung to beauty above or under!

Heav'n kens of Man, but oh! the stars can
blunder,

If Fate's hand guided yonder villain's knife
Through that rare brain, so teeming, daring,
rife

With dower of poets — song and love and
wonder.

Or was it Chance? Shakspeare, who art
supreme

O'er man and men, yet sharest Marlowe's
sight

To pierce the clouds that hide the inhuman
height

Where man and men and gods and all that
seem

Are Nature's mutterings in her changeful
dream—

Come, spell the runes these bloody rivulets
write!

(They drink in silence to the memory of MARLOWE.)

MARLOWE'S FRIEND.

Where'er thou art, "dead Shepherd," look on me;
The boy who loved thee loves more dearly now,
He sees thine eyes in yonder holly-bough;
Oh, Kit, my Kit, the Mermaid drinks to thee!

RALEIGH.

(*Turning to* DAVID GWYNN.)

Wherever billows foam
The Briton fights at home:
His hearth is built of water—water blue and
green;
There's never a wave of ocean
The wind can set in motion
That shall not own our England—own our
England queen.*

* "England is a country that can never be conquered while the Sovereign thereof has the command of the sea."—RALEIGH.

The guest I bring to-night
Had many a goodly fight
On seas the Don hath found—hath found for
English sails ;
And once he dealt a blow
Against the Don to show
What mighty hearts can move—can move in
leafy Wales.

Stand up, bold Master Gwynn,
Who hast a heart akin
To England's own brave hearts—brave hearts
where'er they beat ;
Stand up, brave Welshman, thou,
And tell the Mermaid how
A galley-slave struck hard—struck hard the
Spanish fleet.

CHORUS.

Christmas knows a merry, merry place,
Where he goes with fondest face,
Brightest eye, brightest hair :
Tell the Mermaid where is that one place :
Where ?

DAVID GWYNN'S STORY OF HOW HE AND
THE GOLDEN SKELETON CRIPPLED THE
GREAT ARMADA SAILING OUT

"A GALLEY lie" they called my tale ; but he
Whose talk is with the deep kens mighty
tales.
The man, I say, who helped to keep you
free
Stands here, a truthful son of truthful
Wales.

Slandered by England as a loose-lipped liar,

Banished from Ireland, branded rogue and
thief,

Here stands that Gwynn whose life of
torments dire

Heaven sealed for England, sealed in blood
and fire—

Stands asking here Truth's one reward,
belief!

And Spain shall tell, with pallid lips of
dread,

This tale of mine—shall tell, in future days,
How Gwynn, the galley-slave, once fought and
bled

For England when she moved in perilous
ways;

But say, ye gentlemen of England, sprung

From loins of men whose ghosts have still
the sea—

Doth England—she who loves the loudest
tongue—

Remember mariners whose deeds are sung
By waves where flowed their blood to keep
her free ?

I see—I see ev'n now—those ships of Spain
Gathered in Tagus' mouth to make the
spring ;

I feel the cursèd oar, I toil again,
And trumpets blare, and priests and choir-
boys sing ;

And morning strikes with many a crimson
shaft,

Through ruddy haze, four galleys rowing
out—

Four galleys built to pierce the English craft,
Each swivel-gunned for raking fore and aft,
Snouted like sword-fish, but with iron snout.

And one we call the *Princess*, one the *Royal*,

Diana one ; but 'tis the fell *Basana*

Where I am toiling, Gwynn, the true, the
loyal,

Thinking of mighty Drake and Gloriana ;

For by their help Hope whispers me that I—

Whom ten hours' daily travail at a stretch

Has taught how sweet a thing it is to die—

May strike once more where flags of England
fly,

Strike for myself and many a haggard
wretch.

True sorrow knows a tale it may not tell :

Again I feel the lash that tears my back ;

Again I hear mine own blaspheming yell,

Answered by boatswain's laugh and scourge's
crack ;

Again I feel the pang when trying to choke

Rather than drink the wine, or chew the
bread

Wherewith, when rest for meals would break
the stroke,

They cram our mouths while still we sit at
yoke ;

Again is Life, not Death, the shape of dread.

By Finisterre there comes a sudden gale,

And mighty waves assault our trembling
galley

With blows that strike her waist as strikes a
flail,

And soldiers cry, "What saint shall bid her
rally ?"

Some slaves refuse to row, and some implore

The Dons to free them from the metal tether
By which their limbs are locked upon the
oar ;

Some shout, in answer to the billows' roar,

"The Dons and we will drink brine-wine
together."

"Bring up the slave," I hear the captain
cry,

"Who sank the golden galleon *El Dorado*.
The dog can steer."

"Here sits the dog," quoth I,
"Who sank the ship of Commodore
Medrado!"

With hell-lit eyes, blistered by spray and
rain,

Standing upon the bridge, saith he to me :

"Hearken, thou pirate—bold Medrado's bane!—

Freedom and gold are thine, and thanks of
Spain,

If thou canst take the galley through this
sea."

"Ay! ay!" quoth I. The fools unlock me
straight!

And then 'tis I give orders to the Don,
Laughing within to hear the laugh of Fate,
Whose winning game I know hath just
begun.

I mount the bridge when dies the last red
streak

Of evening, and the moon seems fain for
night.

Oh then I see beneath the galley's beak
A glow like Spanish *auto's* ruddy reek—

Oh then these eyes behold a wondrous
sight!

A skeleton, but yet with living eyes—

A skeleton, but yet with bones like gold—
Squats on the galley-beak, in wondrous wise,
And round his brow, of high imperial mould,

A burning circle seems to shake and shine,
Bright, fiery bright, with many a living
gem,
Throwing a radiance o'er the foam-lit brine :
" 'Tis God's Revenge," methinks. " Heaven
sends for sign
That bony shape—that Inca's diadem."

At first the sign is only seen of me,
But well I know that God's Revenge hath
come
To strike the Armada, set old ocean free,
And cleanse from stain of Spain the
beauteous foam.

Quoth I, " How fierce soever be the levin
Spain's hand can hurl—made mightier still
for wrong
By that great Scarlet One whose hills are
seven—

Yea, howsoever Hell may scoff at Heaven—
Stronger than Hell is God, though Hell is
strong.”

“The dog can steer,” I laugh; “yea, Drake’s
men know
How sea-dogs hold a ship to Biscay
waves.”

Ah! when I bid the soldiers go below,
Some ’neath the hatches, some beside the
slaves,
And bid them stack their muskets all in
piles

Beside the foremast, covered by a sail,
The captives guess my plan — I see their
smiles

As down the waist the cozened troop defiles,
Staggering and stumbling landsmen, faint
and pale.

I say, they guess my plan—to send beneath
The soldiers to the benches where the
slaves

Sit, armed with eager nails and eager teeth—
Hate's nails and teeth more keen than
Spanish glaives,

Then wait until the tempest's waxing might
Shall reach its fiercest, mingling sea and
sky,

Then seize the key, unlock the slaves, and
smite

The sea-sick soldiers in their helpless plight,
Then bid the Spaniards pull at oar or die.

Past Ferrol Bay each galley 'gins to stoop,
Shuddering before the Biscay demon's
breath.

Down goes a prow—down goes a gaudy poop :
“ The Don's *Diana* bears the Don to death,

Quoth I, "and see the *Princess* plunge and
wallow

Down purple trough, o'er snowy crest of foam:
See! see! the *Royal*, how she tries to follow
By many a glimmering crest and shimmering
hollow,

Where gull and petrel scarcely dare to roam."

The four queen-galleys pass Cape Finisterre;
The Armada, dreaming but of ocean-storms,
Thinks not of mutineers with shoulders bare,
Chained, bloody-wealed and pale, on
galley-forms,

Each rower murmuring o'er my whispered plan,
Deep-burnt within his brain in words of fire,
"Rise, every man, to tear to death his man—
Yea, tear as only galley-captives can,
When God's Revenge sings loud to ocean's
lyre."

Taller the spectre grows 'mid ocean's din ;

The captain sees the Skeleton and pales :

I give the sign: the slaves cry, "Ho for
Gwynn !"

"Teach them," quoth I, "the way we grip in
Wales."

And, leaping down where hateful boatswains
shake,

I win the key — let loose a storm of
slaves :

"When captives hold the whip, let drivers
quake,"

They cry ; "sit down, ye Dons, and row for
Drake,

Or drink to England's Queen in foaming
waves."

We leap adown the hatches ; in the dark

We stab the Dons at random, till I see

A spark that trembles like a tinder-spark,

Waxing and brightening, till it seems to be

A fleshless skull, with eyes of joyful fire :

Then, lo ! a bony shape with lifted hands—

A bony mouth that chants an anthem dire,

O'ertopping groans, o'ertopping Ocean's quire—

A skeleton with Inca's diadem stands !

It sings the song I heard an Indian sing,

Chained by the ruthless Dons to burn at
stake,

When priests of Tophet chanted in a ring,

Sniffing man's flesh at roast for Christ His
sake.

The Spaniards hear : they see : they fight no
more ;

They cross their foreheads, but they dare
not speak.

Anon the spectre, when the strife is o'er,

Melts from the dark, then glimmers as before,
Burning upon the conquered galley's beak.

And now the moon breaks through the night,
and shows

The *Royal* bearing down upon our craft—
Then comes a broadside close at hand, which
strows

Our deck with bleeding bodies fore and aft.
I take the helm ; I put the galley near :

We grapple in silver sheen of moonlit surge.
Amid the *Royal's* din I laugh to hear
The curse of many a British mutineer,
The crack, crack, crack of boatswain's biting
scourge.

"Ye scourge in vain," quoth I, "scourging for
life

Slaves who shall row no more to save the
Don ;"

For from the *Royal's* poop, above the strife,
Their captain gazes at our Skeleton !

"What ! is it thou, Pirate of *El Dorado* ?"

He shouts in English tongue. And there,
behold !

Stands he, the devil's commodore, Medrado.

"Ay ! ay !" quoth I, "Spain owes me one
strappado

For scuttling Philip's ship of stolen
gold."

"I come for that strappado now," quoth I.

"What means yon thing of burning bones?"
he saith.

"'Tis God's Revenge cries, 'Bloody Spain shall
die !'

The king of *El Dorado's* name is Death."

"Strike home, ye slaves ; your hour is coming
swift,"

I cry ; “ strong hands are stretched to save
you now ;

Show yonder spectre you are worth the gift.”

But when the *Royal*, captured, rides adrift,
I look : the skeleton hath left our prow.

When all are slain, the tempest’s wings have
fled,

But still the sea is dreaming of the storm :

Far down the offing glows a spot of red,

My soul knows well it hath that Inca’s form.

“ It lights,” quoth I, “ the red cross banner of
Spain

There on the flagship where Medina sleeps—
Hell’s banner, wet with sweat of Indians’
pain,

And tears of women yoked to treasure train,

Scarlet of blood for which the New World
weeps.

There on the dark the flagship of the Don

To me seems luminous of the spectre's glow ;

But soon an arc of gold, and then the Sun,

Rise o'er the reddening billows, proud and
slow ;

Then, through the curtains of the morning mist,

That take all shifting colours as they shake,

I see the great Armada coil and twist

Miles, miles along the ocean's amethyst,

Like an enormous rainbow-tinted snake.

And, when the hazy veils of Morn are thinned,

That snake accursed, with wings which swell
and puff

Before the slackening horses of the wind,

Turns into shining ships that tack and luff.

" Behold," quoth I, " their floating citadels,

The same the priests have vouched for
musket-proof,

Caracks and hulks and nimble caravels,
That sailed with us to sound of Lisbon bells—
Yea, sailed from Tagus' mouth, for Christ's
 behoof.

For Christ's behoof they sailed : see how they go
 With that red skeleton to show the way
There sitting on Medina's stem aglow—
 A hundred sail and forty-nine, men say ;
Behold them, brothers, galleon and galeasse—
 Their dizened turrets bright of many a
 plume,
Their gilded poops, their shining guns of brass,
Their trucks, their flags — behold them, how
 they pass—
With God's Revenge for figurehead — to
 Doom ! ”

BEN JONSON.

Now drink to Drake and drink to those
Who, when they saw through evening's purple
 veils

Medina's flag-ship as it rose
Above the sea-line—then an arc of sails
Break, moonlike, through the offing dim,
With leagues of crimson billows 'tween the
 tips—

Laughed, pointing to the horizon's rim ;
Laughed when they heard the Spanish hymn—
Cried, "See the golden prizes how they
 swim,

Our Spanish ships !"

The men who saw the Armada float,
And lit the beacon fires to spread the
 news,

While smack, and hoy, and fishing boat
Swelled big with pride, and landsmen joined
the crews.

Papist like Lutheran met with laughter
The ban of Rome—Drink to those Papist halls
That rang with shouts from rush to rafter,
“Whate’er the bans the winds may waft
her,

England’s true men are we and Pope’s men
after,

When England calls.”

DRAYTON.

Fill every cup with Mermaid-sack,
And sing a song of Drake and Howard’s men,
Who broke the Spanish Bloodhound’s back
In England’s glorious week of triumph, when
Her fate, which aye was Freedom’s fate,

Hung on the sons she suckled to be free—

When down before them in the Strait

Went that fell flag the free waves hate,

And God said: "England, this is thine estate!"

And gave the sea.

CHORUS.

The sea !

Thus did England fight ;

And shall not England smite

With Drake's strong stroke in battles yet to be?*

And while the winds have power

Shall England lose the dower

She won in that great hour—

The sea ?

* He who alive to them a Dragon was
Shalbe a Dragon unto them againe,
For with his death his terrour shall not passe,
But still amid the aire he shall remaine.

Sir Francis Drake, by CHARLES FITZGEOFFREY
Oxford, 1596.

BEN JONSON.

(*Turning to RALEIGH.*)

To win the Theban prize, each brought his
lay,

When, lo! a stranger stood, wind-flushed
and tanned,

Who sang of marvellous sights in many a land
And voices heard on waters far away.

But fools shall give to fools the bay for prize,
Yea, though Apollo's self hath brought an
ode :

And songs are sung in Time's forgotten mode
When high gods sing from still-receding skies.

The bard whose song the Thebans might not
follow,

Because he sang of more than Theban things,

Was he whose music, struck from Nature's
strings,
Builded the walls of Ilion, great Apollo.

Cried Phœbus, soaring high—his bright feet
shod

With Day that quenched the day and hid the
town—

“Ye spurn Apollo as a sunburnt clown,
Ye pallid priestlings of a sunburnt god!

“The milk-white forehead, tender and dainty-
skinned,

Your sculptors give me—lips too fine to
quaff

The wine of morning—make Olympus
laugh:

Gods know the sun-god bronzed by brine and
wind.”

The Mermaid, "Ocean-shepherd," drinks to thee:
Sunburnt thou art, and knowest the great
round world,
As Phœbus knows: tell us how England hurled
Spain to the bottom of the guardian sea.

CHORUS.

Christmas knows a merry, merry place,
Where he goes with fondest face,
Brightest eye, brightest hair:
Tell the Mermaid where is that one place:
Where?

RALEIGH.

Hail to the wassail-steam that rises
Above the head of him who brewed it, Ben.
Rare shapes it takes and wondrous guises
Of ships, and flags, and guns, and fighting
men.

The Mermaid's spicy steam to-night
Brings back the curling clouds of other smoke—
Less dainty of scent, less pure and white,
Yet sweet and full of high delight
To me who saw how English sailors fight
On English oak.

I feel the west wind blowing in,
And, when out-warps the fleet of every sail,
I hear Drake say, "'Twill soon begin,
The game between the sword-fish and the
whale"—

Hear Wynter say: "Those galleons towered,
With Philip's trinkets, Philip's filigree,
And painted trucks and pennons flowered,
Shall feel the stroke of England's Howard,
And touch the ships of Drake whose keels
have scoured
Philip's own sea."

CHORUS.

The sea !

Thus did England fight ;

And shall not England smite

With Drake's strong stroke in battles yet to be ?

And while the winds have power

Shall England lose the dower

She won in that great hour—

The sea ?

RALEIGH.

Out-warp the ships the Spaniard knew

Ere Drake returned from "singeing Philip's
beard,"

With flags that under Cadiz flew

When right between the Spanish keels he
steered ;

Out-warp the ships John Hawkins made—

Hornets for golden bees from El Dorado—

With keels as fine as rapier-blade,

Slipping to follow or evade

As swiftly through a Spanish cannonade

As sea-gull's shadow.

Off Plymouth Sound the Sabbath smiles

When whale and swordfish meet in deadly
play—

When up the Channel, miles on miles,

The swordfish stabs and stabs and glides away.

The Spaniard hath both sail and oar.

And what hath England? Sons who strike
with glee

To music of the cannon's roar—

Strike, strike till e'en the rooks on shore

Rise scared, and Channel sea-fowls wheel and
soar

Right out to sea.

CHORUS.

The sea !

Thus did England fight ;
And shall not England smite
With Drake's strong stroke in battles yet to be ?
And while the winds have power
Shall England lose the dower
She won in that great hour—
The sea ?

RALEIGH.

And now from bays and creeks and coves,
Through all the sacred ways, from farthest
Scillies

To that sweet bay where whispering groves
Stretch on to many a lawn of Jersey lilies ;
From Lyme to that flower-fragrant home
Of nightingale and rose, beloved Wight,

They come—in smacks, in skiffs they come—
And even in little shallops some—
To show how foes who brave our Channel-foam
Will have to fight.

When, like a playful hound released,
From purple portals of the opening day
At last the wind from out the east
Drives smoke and vapour over Weymouth Bay,
Medina hath the wind, he sees,
And bears on Howard's line with luckless
might ;

And Drake knows well the Narrow Seas
That nurtured him—knows how the breeze
Of summer follows all the sun's decrees
From dawn till night.

At last Medina finds his goal,
And, safe as hunted wolf within his lair,

He anchors close by Calais shoal,
While England's sea-dogs fret around him
there.

"Damned be the foe who will not fight!"
Saith Wynter. "List, my Lord High Admiral;
Beneath yon moon a-shining bright
There lies the Don in direst plight,
With riddled hulls and sails—with men in
fright,
But fight he shall.

"O' nights, my lord, the tide sets down
To where yon gaudy-bellied gold-tubs lie
So close they seem like Plymouth town
Save for the lanterns swaying there on high.
When midnight sounds by Spanish bells,
To-morrow night, before the moon shines free,
Send fire-ships round their caravels,
Their clumsy galleon-citadels;

The Don will deem them 'Antwerp's floating
hells'

That burn on sea."

CHORUS.

The sea!

Thus did England fight ;
And shall not England smite
With Drake's strong stroke in battles yet to be ?
And while the winds have power
Shall England lose the dower
She won in that great hour—
The sea?

RALEIGH.

The midnight bells! I hear them rung!
In strength the Spaniard sleeps, but battle-
thinned;

No dreams hath he of Prowse and Young,
There stealing with the fire-ships down the
wind,

Till smoke up-curles and flames devour
And Night's black wings are glowing like fiery
pinions,

Which wax in light and wax in power,
Illuming Gravelines wakened tower
With sparks and flakes that seem a ruddy
shower

From hell's dominions.

Troops, priests, and sailors dance with dread,
As dance bewildered steeds in burning stables ;
Sails open in the reeking red :

The Fleet Invincible hath slipped its cables !

"The Antwerp fire ! the floating mine !"

The Spaniards shout. But now there comes to me

A sign I know, the Channel's sign—

A sound most like the sleuth hound's whine
When slot is found : Drake knows that cry
divine :

'Tis England's sea !

CHORUS.

The sea !

Thus did England fight ;
And shall not England smite
With Drake's strong stroke in battles yet to be ?
And while the winds have power
Shall England lose the dower
She won in that great hour—
The sea ?

RALEIGH.

Six miles from shore lies trembling Spain,
Yearning for Calais Roads and Flushing sands ;

But Drake hath said, "Never again
Shall Parma with the Golden Duke shake
hands."

The south-west wind has never shifted,
And there, while morning opes bewildered eyes,
While Spain lies shattered, scattered, drifted,
With hulls and sails the balls have rifted,
Both warring fleets as by a hand are lifted—
Our billows rise !

While morning gazes o'er the waves,
Gilding the ships, the Spaniards sallow-skinned,
The cruel oars, the weary slaves,
Drake starts : "What signs are these on sea
and wind ?"

He knows what glorious combatant
Is moving now to hold our England free ;
He knows our Channel's covenant
With Freedom—knows how billows pant,

Ere yet begins the Channel's English chant
Of wind and sea.

CHORUS.

The sea !

Thus did England fight ;
And shall not England smite
With Drake's strong stroke in battles yet to be ?
And while the winds have power
Shall England lose the dower
She won in that great hour—
The sea ?

RALEIGH.

The choirboys sing the matin song,
When down falls Seymour on the Spaniard's
right.
He drives the wing—a huddled throng—

Back on the centre ships, that steer for flight.

While galleon hurtles galeasse,
And oars that fight each other kill the slaves,
As scythes cut down the summer grass,
Drake closes on the writhing mass,
Through which the balls at closest ranges pass,
Skimming the waves.

Fiercely do galley and galeasse fight,
Running from ship to ship like living things.
With oars like legs, with beaks that smite,
Winged centipedes they seem with tattered
wings.

Through smoke we see their chiefs encased
In shining mail of gold where blood congeals ;
And once I see within a waist
Wild English captives ashen-faced,
Their bending backs by Spanish scourges laced
In purple weals.

(DAVID GWYNN *here leaps up, pale and panting, and
bares a scarred arm, but at a sign from RALEIGH
sits down again.*)

The Don fights well, but fights not now
The cozened Indian whom he kissed for friend,
To pluck the gold from off the brow,
Then fling the flesh to priests to burn and
rend.

He hunts not now the Indian maid
With bloodhound's bay — Peru's confiding
daughter,
Who saw in flowery bower or glade
The stranger's god-like cavalcade,
And worshipped, while he planned Pizarro's
trade
Of rape and slaughter.

His fight is now with Drake and Wynter,
Hawkins, and Frobisher, and English fire,

Bullet and cannon ball and splinter,
Till every deck gleams, greased with bloody
mire :

Heaven smiles to see that battle wage,
Close battle of musket, carabine, and gun :

Oh, vainly doth the Spaniard rage

Like any wolf that tears his cage !

'Tis English sails shall win the weather gauge
Till set of sun !

Their troops, superfluous as their gold,
Out-numbering all their seamen two to one,
Are packed away in every hold—

Targets of flesh for every English gun—

Till, like Pizarro's halls of blood,
Or slaughter-pens where swine or beeves are
pinned,

Lee-scuppers pour a crimson flood,

Reddening the waves for many a rood,

As eastward, eastward still the galleons scud
Before the wind.

“Doth mighty Parma wait to join
The ‘deathless fleet’ that holds four thousand
dead ?

That fleet shall never turn the Groyne
If cannon-gear be ours and sailors’ bread.”

As thus he speaks brave Cumberland
Sweeps down to set the crown on Victory ;
While privateers on every hand
Are flocking, flocking, from the land,
To drive out Philip’s Pope-anointed band
To the open sea.

CHORUS.

The sea !
Thus did England fight ;
And shall not England smite

With Drake's strong stroke in battles yet to be?
And while the winds have power
Shall England lose the dower
She won in that great hour—
The sea ?

BEN JONSON.

(At the conclusion of RALEIGH'S song.)

Sweet is the song of victories
Which only leaves the singer's deed unsung.

(He stops, having perceived that GWYNN, who has been following RALEIGH'S story with intense excitement, has now passed into a condition resembling hysteria, staring into the air and pulling open his dress to display scars of the branding iron and of the boatswain's galley-scourge.)

Look to thy friend ! Before his eyes
What ghostly picture in the air is hung ?

LODGE.

Good Master Gwynn, we pray thee tell
The Mermaid what hath blanched thy lips and
brow.

DEKKER.

Some sight he sees of Death or Hell.

CHAPMAN.

We marvel, friend, what mighty spell,
Making each vein upon thy forehead swell,
Hath seized thee now.

GWYNN.

With towering sterns, with golden stems
That totter in the smoke before their foe,
I see them pass the mouth of Thames,
With death above the billows, death below !

Who leads them down the tempest's path,
From Thames to Yare, from Yare to Tweed-
mouth blown,

Past many a Scottish hill and strath,
All helpless in the wild wind's wrath,
Each mainmast stooping, creaking like a lath ?
The Skeleton !

At length with toil the cape is passed,
And faster and faster still the billows come
To coil and boil till every mast
Is flecked with clinging flakes of snowy foam.
I see, I see, where galleons pitch,
That Inca's bony shape burn on the waves,
Flushing each emerald scarp and ditch,
While Mother Carey, Orkney's witch,
Waves to the Spectre's song her lantern-
switch
O'er ocean-graves.

The glimmering crown of Scotland's head
They pass. No foe dares follow but the storm.

The Spectre, like a sunset red,
Illumines mighty Wrath's defiant form,
And makes the dreadful granite peak
Burn o'er the ships with brows of prophecy ;
Yea, makes that silent countenance speak
Above the tempest's foam and reek,
More loud than all the loudest winds that
shriek,

“ Tyrants, ye die ! ”

The Spectre, by the Orkney Isles,
Writes “ God's Revenge ” on waves that climb
and dash,
Foaming right up the sand-built piles,
Where ships are hurled. It sings amid the
crash ;
Yea, sings amid the tempest's roar,

Snapping of ropes, cracking of spars set
free,

And yells of captives chained to oar,

And cries of those who strike for shore,

"Spain's murderous breath of blood shall foul
no more

The righteous sea!"

BEN JONSON.

So lists the Mermaid to the sailor's song,*

But let not wassail cool on Christmas
Eve :

The hero's tale being told, why, let us
leave

For merrier themes the fight of Right with
Wrong.

* "So lists the sailor to the mermaid's song."—*Arden of Feversham*.

WASSAIL CHORUS.

CHORUS.

CHRISTMAS knows a merry, merry place,
Where he goes with fondest face,
Brightest eye, brightest hair :
Tell the Mermaid where is that one place :
Where ?

RALEIGH.

'Tis by Devon's glorious halls,
Whence, dear Ben, I come again :
Bright with golden roofs and walls—
El Dorado's rare domain—
Seem those halls when sunlight launches
Shafts of gold through leafless branches,
Where the winter's feathery mantle blanches
Field and farm and lane.

CHORUS.

Christmas knows a merry, merry place,
Where he goes with fondest face,
Brightest eye, brightest hair :
Tell the Mermaid where is that one place :
Where ?

DRAYTON.

'Tis where Avon's wood-sprites weave
Through the boughs a lace of rime,
While the bells of Christmas Eve
Fling for Will the Stratford-chime
O'er the river-flags embossed
Rich with flowery runes of frost—
O'er the meads where snowy tufts are
tossed—
Strains of olden time.

CHORUS.

Christmas knows a merry, merry place,
Where he goes with fondest face,
Brightest eye, brightest hair :
Tell the Mermaid where is that one place :
Where ?

"MR. W. H."

'Tis, methinks, on any ground
Where our Shakspeare's feet are set.
There smiles Christmas, holly-crowned
With his blithest coronet :
Friendship's face he loveth well :
'Tis a countenance whose spell
Sheds a balm o'er every mead and dell
Where we used to fret.

CHORUS.

Christmas knows a merry, merry place,
Where he goes with fondest face,
Brightest eye, brightest hair :
Tell the Mermaid where is that one place :
Where ?

HEYWOOD.

More than all the pictures, Ben,
Winter weaves by wood or stream,
Christmas loves our London, when
Rise thy clouds of wassail-steam—
Clouds like these, that, curling, take
Forms of faces gone, and wake
Many a lay from lips we loved, and make
London like a dream.

CHORUS.

Christmas knows a merry, merry place,
Where he goes with fondest face,
Brightest eye, brightest hair :
Tell the Mermaid where is that one place :
Where ?

BEN JONSON.

Love's old songs shall never die,
Yet the new shall suffer proof ;
Love's old drink of Yule brew I,
Wassail for new love's behoof :
Drink the drink I brew, and sing
Till the berried branches swing,
Till our song make all the Mermaid ring—
Yea, from rush to roof.

FINALE.

Christmas loves this merry, merry place :—

Christmas saith with fondest face,

Brightest eye, brightest hair :

“ Ben ! the drink tastes rare of sack and mace :

Rare ! ”

A TALK ON WATERLOO BRIDGE

THE LAST SIGHT OF GEORGE BORROW

WE talked of "Children of the Open Air,"
Who once on hill and valley lived aloof,
Loving the sun, the wind, the sweet reproof
Of storms, and all that makes the fair earth
 fair,
Till, on a day, across the mystic bar
Of moonrise, came the "Children of the
 Roof,"
Who find no balm 'neath evening's rosiest
 woof,
Nor dews of peace beneath the Morning Star

We looked o'er London, where men wither and
choke,

Roofed in, poor souls, renouncing stars and
skies,

And lore of woods and wild wind prophecies,

Yea, every voice that to their fathers spoke :

And sweet it seemed to die ere bricks and
smoke

Leave never a meadow outside Paradise.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

A DEAD POET

THOU knewest that island, far away and lone,
Whose shores are as a harp, where billows
break

In spray of music and the breezes shake
O'er spicy seas a woof of colour and tone,
While that sweet music echoes like a moan
In the island's heart, and sighs around the
lake,

Where, watching fearfully a watchful snake,
A damsel weeps upon her emerald throne.

Life's ocean, breaking round thy senses' shore,
Struck golden song, as from the strand of

Day :

For us the joy, for thee the fell foe lay—
Pain's blinking snake around the fair isle's core,
Turning to sighs the enchanted sounds that
play

Around thy lovely island evermore.

A GRAVE BY THE SEA

I

YON sightless poet* whom thou leav'st behind,
Sightless and trembling like a storm-struck
tree,

Above the grave he feels but cannot see,
Save with the vision Sorrow lends the
mind,

Is he indeed the loneliest of mankind ?

Ah no !—For all his sobs, he seems to me
Less lonely standing there, and nearer thee,
Than I—less lonely, nearer—standing blind !

* Philip Bourke Marston.

Free from the day, and piercing Life's disguise
That needs must partly enveil true heart
from heart,

His inner eyes may see thee as thou art
In Memory's land—see thee beneath the
skies

Lit by thy brow—by those beloved eyes,
While I stand by him in a world apart.

II

I stand like her who on the glittering Rhine
Saw that strange swan which drew a faëry
boat

Where shone a knight whose radiant fore-
head smote

Her soul with light and made her blue eyes
shine

For many a day with sights that seemed divine,
Till that false swan returned and arched his
throat

In pride, and called him, and she saw him
float

A down the stream : I stand like her and pine.

I stand like her, for she, and only she,
Might know my loneliness for want of thee.

Light swam into her soul, she asked not
whence,

Filled it with joy no clouds of life could
smother,

And then, departing like a vision thence,
Left her more lonely than the blind, my brother.

III

Last night Death whispered : "Death is but
the name

Man gives the Power which lends him life
and light,

And then, returning past the coast of night,
Takes what it lent to shores from whence it
came."

What balm in knowing the dark doth but
reclaim

The sun it lent, if day hath taken flight ?

Art thou not vanished—vanished from my
sight—

Though somewhere shining, vanished all the
same ?

With Nature dumb, save for the billows' moan,
Engirt by men I love, yet desolate—

Standing with brothers here, yet dazed and
lone,

King'd by my sorrow, made by grief so
great

That man's voice murmurs like an insect's
drone—

What balm, I ask, in knowing that Death is
Fate ?

IV

Last night Death whispered : " Life's purblind
procession,

Flickering with blazon of the human story—

Time's fen-flame over Death's dark terri-
tory—

Will leave no trail, no sign of Life's aggres-
sion.

Yon moon that strikes the pane, the stars in
session,

Are weak as Man they mock with fleeting
glory.

Since Life is only Death's frail feudatory,
How shall love hold of Fate in true possession?"

I answered thus: "If Friendship's isle of palm

Is but a vision, every loveliest leaf,

Can knowledge of its mockery soothe and calm

This soul of mine in this most fiery grief?

If Love but holds of Life through Death in
fief,

What balm in knowing that Love is Death's—
what balm?"

V

Yea, thus I boldly answered Death—even I
Who have for boon—who have for deathless
dower—

Thy love, dear friend, which broods, a magic
power,

Filling with music earth and sea and sky :

“ O Death,” I said, “ not Love, but thou shalt
die ;

For, this I know, though thine is now the
hour,

And thine these angry clouds of doom that
lour,

Death striking Love but strikes to deify.”

Yet while I spoke I sighed in loneliness,

For strange seemed Man, and Life seemed
comfortless,

And night, whom we two loved, seemed
strange and dumb ;
And, waiting till the dawn the promised sign,
I watched—I listened for that voice of thine,
Though Reason said : “ Nor voice nor face
can come.”

BIRCHINGTON, EASTERTIDE 1882

THE OMNIPOTENCE OF LOVE

I

THE SLAVE GIRL'S PROGRESS TO PARADISE *

(Beneath the cypress overhanging her lover's tomb the slave girl lies stretched on the stone. In the shadow by the tree are seen the "wide black eyes" and the sombre wings of Azrael, the Angel of Death.)

THE SLAVE GIRL.

ANGEL of Death! Hearken in yonder wood

How turtle and nightingale are murmuring

"Pity";

* Although the Koran refers three times to the wives of the just accompanying them into Paradise (Sura xiii. 36-42), and although there is a tradition of a Paradise apart from the men reserved for the few women whom Mohammed did not see in his vision of perdition, the popular notion in some Mohammedan countries is that women have no souls to be either blessed or damned.

"Pity," yon slave-girls moan who brought me
food

And milk and shawls, to soothe my solitude :
See how they weep, returning to the city.

(ILYÀS THE PROPHET, *who is passing the tomb, stops
to listen.*)

ILYÀS.

What sorrow, child, hath made thee fain to
die ?

THE SLAVE GIRL.

I would not die : this frame of mine remem-
bers
Each touch of his which gave it sanctity,
Flickering within the body's memory,
As come and go the sparks in slumbering
embers.

Save me from Azrael—him whose sword
divides

Love's dearest bonds—whose malice struck
to sever

My life from one who loves me, though he
bides

Where never slave girl stood, with houri brides.

I would not die, but live and weep for ever.

ILYÀS TO AZRAEL.

Yea, Love is strong! This child would spend
her days

Here on this tomb with cypress boughs for
cover,

While travellers whisper as they stop and gaze
Across the graveyard, "See how love can craze!

She lives upon the tomb where sleeps her
lover."

THE SLAVE GIRL.

Death knows I have no soul, and never more
Those lips shall touch the widowed lips that
quiver
With memories of the light which once they
wore.
Death knows I have no soul with wings to
soar
To one who stands beside the Holy river.

*(A spirit resembling the slave girl herself in form and
feature, but winged like a Peri, descends from the
sunset clouds, leaving an iridescent track behind it.)*

ILYÀS TO AZRAEEL.

Allah sends a vision down the air
That leaves a rainbow track o'er thy
dominions.

THE SLAVE GIRL.

What shape is that which treads the Peris'
stair?

It stands beside me now with shining hair,
I breathe the musk of Aidenn from its
pinions.

ILYÀS.

No soulless Peri this whose eyes illumine
With mirrored radiance of a deathless
glory
The cypress branches round thy lover's
tomb,
And flush the vans of Death with such a
bloom
That Evening's rosy wings seem wan and
hoary.

THE SLAVE GIRL TO THE VISION.

Spirit, whose tears are falling on the stone,
Doth sorrow stamp an angel's forehead
human ?
Thou speakest not, but as a sight half known,
Within a dream, thy face seems like mine
own,
And eyes that weep must needs be kin to
woman.

AZRAEEL.

Thy lover waiteth by the Holy Lote.

THE SLAVE GIRL.

With houris ?

AZRAEEL.

Nay, he loveth still a maiden.

THE SLAVE GIRL.

That maiden hath no soul to ford the moat.

ILYÀS.

Thou'rt loved of Allah !

THE SLAVE GIRL.

Yet his servant smote
Him whom the houris dare not clasp in
Aidenn.

(The spirit stoops and kisses the slave girl's forehead.)

ILYÀS.

I think the spirit's kiss upon thy brow
Seals Allah's promise of a blissful morrow.

THE SLAVE GIRL TO THE VISION.

Morrow for me ! Speak, spirit, who art thou ?

ILYÀS.

'Tis thine own soul—the spirit with thee now
Is thine own soul new-lit by love and
sorrow.

II

THE BEDOUIN-CHILD

*(Among the Bedouins a father in enumerating his
children never counts his daughters, for a daughter
is considered a disgrace.)*

ILYÀS the prophet, lingering 'neath the moon,
Heard from a tent a child's heart-withering
wail,
Mixt with the message of the nightingale,
And, entering, found, sunk in mysterious
swoon,
A little maiden dreaming there alone.
She babbled of her father sitting pale

'Neath wings of Death—'mid sights of
sorrow and bale,
And pleaded for his life in piteous tone.

"Poor child, plead on," the succouring prophet
saith,

While she, with eager lips, like one who
tries

To kiss a dream, stretches her arms and
cries

To Heaven for help—"Plead on; such pure
love-breath,

Reaching the Throne, might stay the wings of
Death

That, in the Desert, fan thy father's eyes."

The drouth-slain camels lie on every hand;
Seven sons await the morning vultures'
claws;

'Mid empty water-skins and camel-maws
The father sits, the last of all the band.
He mutters, drowsing o'er the moonlit sand,
 "Sleep fans my brow: Sleep makes us all
 pashas;
Or, if the wings are Death's, why Azraeel
 draws
A childless father from an empty land."

"Nay," saith a Voice, "the wind of Azraeel's
 wings
A child's sweet breath hath stilled; so God
 decrees":—
A camel's bell comes tinkling on the breeze,
Filling the Bedouin's brain with bubble of
 springs
And scent of flowers and shadow of wavering
 trees
Where, from a tent, a little maiden sings.

JOHN THE PILGRIM

A.D. 1249

THE MIRAGE

BENEATH the sand-storm John the Pilgrim
prays ;

But when he rises, lo ! an Eden smiles,

Green leafy slopes, meadows of chamomiles,

Claspt in a silvery river's winding maze :

"Water, water ! Blessed be God !" he says,

And totters gasping toward those happy
isles.

Then all is fled ! Over the sandy piles

The bald-eyed vultures come and stand at
gaze.

“God heard me not,” says he, “blessed be
God!”

And dies. But as he nears the pearly
strand,

Heav’n’s outer coast where waiting angels
stand,

He looks below : “Farewell, thou hooded clod,
Brown corpse the vultures tear on bloody
sand :

God heard my prayer for life—blessed be
God!”

COLUMBUS

FOR THE FESTIVAL AT HUELVA

A Castilla y a Leon
Nuevo Mundo dió Colon.

To Christ he cried to quell Death's deafening
measure

Sung by the storm to Death's own chartless
sea ;

To Christ he cried for glimpse of grass or
tree

When, hovering o'er the calm, Death watched
at leisure ;

And when he showed the men, now dazed
with pleasure,

Faith's new world glittering star-like on the
lee,

"I trust that by the help of Christ," said he,
"I presently shall light on golden treasure."

What treasure found he? Chains and pains
and sorrow—

Yea, all the wealth those noble seekers find
Whose footfalls mark the music of mankind!
'Twas his to lend a life : 'twas Man's to borrow :
'Twas his to make, but not to share, the
morrow

Who in Love's memory lives this morn en-
shrined.

BEATRICE

FOR THE SIXTH CENTENARY OF BEATRICE'S DEATH,
COMMEMORATED AT FLORENCE IN MAY, 1890

THOU, spreading through six hundred years an
air

Of memory fresh as Morning's altar-spice,
Thou, Star of Dante—Star of Paradise,
Hast made the star of womanhood more fair ;
For though thou art now his lofty guardian
there,

Victress o'er jealous Sin, who dared entice
His feet from thee *—though now the high
device

* "Purg.," c. xxx. See also Guido Cavalcanti's sonnet to Dante Alighieri, rebuking his way of life after the death of Beatrice.

Of wisdom lights the wreath around thine
hair ;

Those eyes can dim the angels' eyes above
Because they tell what flight was thine
below :

No eagle-flight past peaks of fire and snow,
But through Life's leaves the flutter of a dove
Whose beating wings soothed Dante's air with
love—

Struck music from the wind of Dante's woe.

THE THREE FAUSTS

INSCRIBED TO MISS ELEONORE D'ESTERRE KEELING

I

THE MUSIC OF HELL

I HAD a dream of wizard harps of hell
Beating through starry worlds a pulse of pain
That held them shuddering in a fiery spell,
Yea, spite of all their songs—a fell refrain
Which, leaping from some red orchestral sun,
Through constellations and through eyeless
space
Sought some pure core of bale, and finding
one
(An orb whose shadows flickering on her face

Seemed tragic shadows from some comic mime,
Incarnate visions mouthing hopes and fears
That Fate was playing to the Fiend of Time),
Died in a laugh 'mid oceanic tears :
“Berlioz,” I said, “thy strong hand makes me
weep,
That God did ever wake a world from sleep.”

II

THE MUSIC OF EARTH

I had a dream of golden harps of earth :
And when they shook the web of human life,
The warp of sorrow and the weft of mirth,
Divinely trembling in a blissful strife,
Seemed answering in a dream that master-
song
Which built the world and lit the holy skies.

Oh, then my listening soul waxed great and
strong

Till my flesh trembled at her high replies !

But when the web seemed answering lower
strings

Which hymn the temple at the god's expense,

And bid the soul fly low on fleshly wings

To gather dews—rich honey-dews of sense,

“Gounod,” I said, “I love that siren-breath,

Though with it chimes the throbbing heart of
Death.”

III

THE MUSIC OF HEAVEN

I had a dream of azure harps of heaven

Beating through starry worlds a pulse of
joy,

Quickening the light with Love's electric
leaven,
Quelling Death's hand, uplifted to destroy,
Building the rainbow there with tears of man
High over hell, bright over Night's abysses,
The arc of sorrow in a smiling span
Of tears of many a lover's dying kisses,
And tears of many a Gretchen's towering
sorrow,
And many a soul fainting for dearth of kin,
And many a soul that hath but night for
morrow,
And many a soul that hath no day but sin;
"Schumann," I said, "thine is a wondrous
story
Of tears so bright they dim the seraphs'
glory."

TOAST TO OMAR KHAYYÀM

AN EAST ANGLIAN ECHO-CHORUS

INSCRIBED TO OLD OMARIAN FRIENDS IN MEMORY OF
HAPPY DAYS BY OUSE AND CAM

CHORUS.

IN this red wine, where Memory's eyes seem
glowing,

And days when wines were bright by Ouse
and Cam,

And Norfolk's foaming nectar glittered,
showing

What beard of gold John Barleycorn was
growing,

We drink to thee, right heir of Nature's
knowing,

Omar Khayyàm !

I

Star-gazer, who canst read, when Night is
strowing

Her scripted orbs on Time's wide ori-
flamme,

Nature's proud blazon : "Who shall bless or
damn ?

Life, Death, and Doom are all of my bestowing !"

CHORUS : Omar Khayyàm !

II

Poet, whose stream of balm and music, flowing
Through Persian gardens, widened till it
swam—

A fragrant tide no bank of Time shall dam—
Through Suffolk meads, where gorse and may
were blowing,

CHORUS : Omar Khayyàm !

III

Who blent thy song with sound of cattle
lowing,
And caw of rooks that perch on ewe and ram,
And hymn of lark, and bleat of orphan lamb,
And swish of scythe in Bredfield's dewy
mowing ?

CHORUS : Omar Khayyàm !

IV

'Twas Fitz, "Old Fitz," whose knowledge,
farther going
Than lore of Omar, "Wisdom's starry
Cham,"
Made richer still thine opulent epigram :
Sowed seed from seed of thine immortal
sowing.

CHORUS : Omar Khayyàm

In this red wine, where Memory's eyes seem
glowing,

And days when wines were bright by Ouse
and Cam,

And Norfolk's foaming nectar glittered,
showing

What beard of gold John Barleycorn was
growing,

We drink to thee till, hark! the cock is
crowing!

Omar Khayyām!

PRAYER TO THE WINDS

ON PLANTING AT THE HEAD OF FITZGERALD'S
GRAVE TWO ROSE-TREES WHOSE ANCESTORS
HAD SCATTERED THEIR PETALS OVER THE
TOMB OF OMAR KHAYYÂM

*"My tomb shall be on a spot where the north-wind
may strow roses upon it."* — OMAR KHAYYÂM to
KWÁJAH NIZAMI.

HEAR us, ye winds !

From where the north-wind strows
Blossoms that crown "the King of Wis-
dom's" tomb,
The trees here planted bring remembered
bloom,
Dreaming in seed of Love's ancestral rose,

To meadows where a braver north-wind blows
O'er greener grass, o'er hedge-rose, may,
and broom,
And all that make East England's field-
perfume
Dearer than any fragrance Persia knows.

Hear us, ye winds, North, East, and West and
South,

This granite covers him whose golden mouth
Made wiser ev'n the Word of Wisdom's
King:

Blow softly over Omar's Western herald
Till roses rich of Omar's dust shall spring
From richer dust of Suffolk's rare Fitzgerald.

QUEEN KATHERINE

ON SEEING MISS ELLEN TERRY AS KATHERINE
IN "KING HENRY VIII."

SEEKING a tongue for tongueless shadow-land,
Has Katherine's soul come back with power
to quell

A sister-soul incarnate, and compel
Its bodily voice to speak by Grief's command?
Or is it Katherine's self returns to stand

As erst she stood defying Wolsey's spell—
Returns with those wild wrongs she fain
would tell

Which Memory bore to Eden's amaranth-
strand?

Or is it thou, dear friend—this Queen, whose
face

The salt of many tears hath scarred and
stung?—

Can it be thou, whose genius, ever young,
Lighting the body with the spirit's grace,
Is loved by England—loved by all the race
Round all the world enlinked by Shake-
speare's tongue !

DICKENS RETURNS ON CHRISTMAS DAY

A ragged girl in Drury Lane was heard to exclaim :
“Dickens dead? Then will Father Christmas die
too?”—*June 9, 1870.*

“DICKENS is dead!” Beneath that grievous
cry

London seemed shivering in the summer
heat ;

Strangers took up the tale like friends that
meet :

Dickens is dead ! said they, and hurried by ;

Street children stopped their games — they
knew not why,

But some new night seemed darkening down
the street.

A girl in rags, staying her way-worn feet,
Cried, "Dickens dead? Will Father Christmas
die?"

City he loved, take courage on thy way!

He loves thee still, in all thy joys and fears.
Though he whose smile made bright thine eyes
of grey—

Though he whose voice, uttering thy bur-
thened years,

Made laughter bubble through thy sea of
tears—

Is gone, Dickens returns on Christmas Day!

THE CHRISTMAS TREE AT "THE
PINES"

LIFE still hath one romance that naught can
bury—

Not Time himself, who coffins Life's
romances—

For still will Christmas gild the year's mis-
chances,

If Childhood comes, as here, to make him
merry—

To kiss with lips more ruddy than the cherry—

To smile with eyes outshining by their glances

The Christmas tree—to dance with fairy
dances

And crown his hoary brow with leaf and berry.

And as to us, dear friend, the carols sung

Are fresh as ever. Bright is yonder bough

Of mistletoe as that which shone and swung

When you and I and Friendship made a

vow

That Childhood's Christmas still should seal

each brow—

Friendship's, and yours, and mine—and keep

us young.

PROPHETIC PICTURES AT VENICE

I

THE WALTZ AT THE VENETIAN REVELS,
NEW YEAR'S EVE, 1866

Has she forgotten for such halls as these
The domes the angels built in holy times,
When wings were ours in childhood's flowery
climes

To dance with butterflies and golden bees?—
Forgotten how the sunny-fingered breeze
Shook out those English harebells' magic
chimes

On that child-wedding morn, 'neath English
limes,
'Mid wild-flowers tall enough to kiss her
knees?

The love that childhood cradled—girlhood
nursed—

Has she forgotten it for this dull play,
Where far-off pigmies seem to waltz and
sway

Like dancers in a telescope reversed?

Or does not pallid Conscience come and
say,

“Who sells her glory of beauty stands
accursed”?

But was it *this* that bought her—this poor
splendour

That won her from her troth and wild-
flower wreath

Who “cracked the foxglove bells” on Gray-
land Heath,

Or played with playful winds that tried to
bend her,

Or, tripping through the deer-park, tall and
slender,

Answered the larks above, the crakes be-
neath,

Or mocked, with glitter of laughing lips and
teeth,

When Love grew grave—to hide her soul's
surrender ?

Her soul's surrender ! Well — yon future
spouse

Paid nothing for the soul ! He bought, as
rake,

“A woman's points” : kisses these lips that
shake

The heart with wonder when they seal their
vows—

These eyes where hues of sky and ocean take
All shapes of love—these brows !—my darling's
brows !

The body knows me as I touch her waist—

The fingers throbbing through the little
glove—

The fingers trembling at my arm above—

The breast whose pearls are heaving inter-
laced :

All know these arms of mine that once em-
braced.

Though I could give no palace — only
love—

That gift which “only a child had dared ap-
prove”—

The soul's sweet temple holds me uneffaced :

The body feels me “crack” those foxglove bells

In this soft hand to “make the elfin
thunder” :

In these pink ears I think the music swells

To Fate's world-waltz that holds the stars
asunder :

But 'tis the soul has learnt what Mammon
sells:

As here we spin, what are its thoughts? I
wonder.

II

THE TEMPTATION

THE SLEEPLESS NIGHT AFTER THE WALTZ AT
THE VENETIAN REVELS

WHEN hope lies dead—ah, when 'tis death to
live,

And wrongs remembered make the heart
still bleed,

Better are Sleep's kind lies for Life's blind
need

Than truth, if lies a little peace can give.

A little peace! 'tis thy prerogative,

O Sleep! to lend it; thine to quell or feed

This love that starves—this starving soul's
long greed,
And bid Regret, the queen of hell, forgive.
Yon moon that mocks me thro' the uncurtained
glass
Recalls that other night, that other moon,—
Two English lovers on a grey lagoon,—
The voices from the lantern'd gondolas,
The kiss, the breath, the flashing eyes, and,
soon,
The throbbing stillness: all the heaven that
was.

(The Lover rises from his bed and opens the window. While he looks out, a pearl necklace, to which is suspended an amulet, an antique Venetian ruby cross, is thrown in. This he takes from the floor and examines with repeated exclamations of surprise. After partly dressing himself as if to go out, he suddenly stops, throws off his clothes, shuts the window, hangs the necklace and cross on the antique window-fastening; then returns to his bed and lies watching the moonlight playing round the rubies.)

III

PROPHETIC PICTURES ON THE
WALLS

How red the light of New Year's morning falls
On each emblazoned pane whose tints illumine
With prophecies the pictures round the
room!

The warriors, doges, nobles, cardinals,
Battles, processions, floating festivals,
Venetian girls, Venetian dames a-bloom
With mid-life's chilly joys of gem and plume,—
All leap to life upon the kindled walls.
Each painted vision seems a living part
Of Memory's pageant marshalled by my
grief.

It says, "The New Year garners no relief,
No solace for that anguish at thy heart."
The light that falls thro' yonder amulet
Makes every picture say, "Forget, forget."

IV

PROPHECY OF THE FIRST PICTURE

*(The light falls through the rubies on the picture of
"The Dark Knight and the Ferryman." The Lover
reads aloud the descriptive verses on the frame.)*

THE boatman sate with brawny arms em-
browned,

Steadying the wherry as it rocked afloat ;

The "Dark Knight" came, and on his shield
and coat

Symbols of doom and hell's devices frowned.

He leapt aboard. "Wilt row to Devil's
Ground

For gold?" The man sate dumb with chok-
ing throat.

"Who finds the devil in his ferry-boat
Must row him," said his soul, "across the
sound." *

* "He who takes the devil in his boat must row across
the sound."—OLD PROVERB.

To Devil's Ground he rowed, a sulphurous
coast ;

"Alight," said then the Knight, "'tis here
we dwell."

"Nay, Dark Knight, nay, though here my
boat hath crossed,

I asked thee not aboard." "Thou rowest
well ;

Who ships the devil is not always lost,

But lost is he who rows him home to Hell."

V

PROPHECY OF THE SECOND PICTURE

*(The light falls through the rubies on the picture of
"The Damsel of the Plain." The Lover reads
aloud the descriptive verses on the frame.)*

CHILDE ROWLAND found a Damsel on the
Plain,

Her daffodil crown lit all her shining head ;

He kissed her mouth, and through the world
they sped,
The beauteous, smiling world, in sun and
rain.
But when long joys made love a golden
chain,
He slew her by the sea; then, as he fled,
Voices of earth and air and ocean said,
"The maid was Truth : God bids you meet
again."

Between the devil and a wild, deep sea
He met a foe more soul-compelling still ;
A feathered snake the monster seemed to be,
And wore a wreath o' the yellow daffodil.
Then spake the devil : " Rowland, fly to me :
When murdered Truth returns she comes to
kill."

VI

PROPHECY OF THE THIRD PICTURE

(The light falls through the rubies on the Rosicrucian panel-picture called "The Rosy Scar," depicting Christian galley-slaves on board an Algerine galley watching, on Christmas-eve, for the promised appearance of Rosenkreutz as a "rosy-phantom." The Lover reads aloud the descriptive verses on the frame.)

"WHILE Night's dark horses waited for the
wind,

He stood—he shone—where Sunset's fiery
glaives

Flickered behind the clouds; then, o'er the
waves,

He came to them, Faith's remnant sorrow-
thinned.

The Paynim sailors clustering, tawny-skinned,
Cried, 'Who, is he that comes to Christian
slaves?

Nor water-sprite nor jinni of sunset caves,

The rosy phantom stands nor winged nor
finned."

All night he stood till shone the Christmas-
star ;

Slowly the Rosy Cross, streak after streak,
Flushed the grey sky—flushed sea and sail
and spar,

Flushed, blessing every slave's woe-wasted
cheek.

Then did great Rosenkreutz, the Dew-King,
speak :

"Sufferers, take heart, Christ lends the Rosy
Scar."

* * * * *

* * * * *

VII

NEW YEAR'S MORNING, 1867, AT VENICE
AFTER HER LIBERATION

*(The Lover goes to the window and gazes down the Grand
Canal, over which the morning is glowing.)*

"MAN'S knowledge, save before his fellow
man,

Is ignorance—his widest wisdom folly.

In Nature's eyes still gazing, dazzled wholly
By sights his own eyes make, how should he
scan

Pictures like those in Nature's iris-span ?

Hers show the cypress, his the melancholy,
His shine with Christmas, hers with simple
holly

That knew no mirth till Yule-tide feasts began."

So Reason says ; yet to my heart it seems

That yonder sun, firing the mists of
morn,

Gilding each dome that scorned the Austrian's
scorn,
Painting the Grand Canal with rosy gleams,
Looks conscious down on me and vanished
dreams—
But — Freedom's year o'er Venice smiles
new-born !

WHAT THE SILENT VOICES SAID

A SONNET SEQUENCE

I

IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

"As the procession wound through the vast fane, bars and curiously formed flakes of golden light would, every now and then, break through the gloomy atmosphere and play along the tops of the arches and the roof."

"Love is the spirit's life and withers never :

We twain shall meet again on some bright
shore !"

So spake my heart, but still within its core
Whisper'd that foe who mocks the soul's endeavour :

"The very greatness of the man shall sever

Thy soul from such a soul so wing'd to
soar :

Love wins no starry strand that can restore
To thee a soul whose pinions mount for ever."

Though well I knew the voice was coward
Fear's,

It marred the solemn music in mine ears,

Till, sudden, through the vapour-curtain grey
Veiling the roof, fluttered a flake of light :

A golden hand it seemed : I saw it play
Along the roof—along the "Lantern's" height.

II

THE GOLDEN HAND

WAS it a sign from those, forgot by Fame,
Who built the minster—built by that same
spell

Which bids the honey-bee fit cell to cell—
Who shaped in joy until dead stone became
A thing of life—who worked with poet's aim
When seized by song to make what shall
compel

The maker's own fierce heart to say "'Tis
well"—

Careless for other praise, for other blame?

For I recalled how scarce three years before
I followed Browning down the sacred floor,
When minster-spirits seemed to haunt the
fane :—

Heroes of song and those whose blood was
spilt

For England and those nameless ones who
built

Our temple seemed to join the funeral
train.

III

THE GOLDEN SCROLL

"THAT beckoning hand," I said, "mysterious,
golden,

Playing along the roof in bright unrest

As if in welcome of this royal guest :

Comes it from those who built these arches
olden ?"

But as I spoke it changed : a scroll unfolden

Shone with the master's words that oft had
bless'd

My heart in youth when, dark and sorely
press'd,

It yearned for light to strengthen and em-
bolden.

I read the words that helped me when a boy

Roaming with book in hand the Ouse's side :

I drew again, from founts that cannot cloy,
Draughts of immortal song, till Faith defied
Fear's hissing head, and poetry and joy
And youth returned, and grief was quelled
by pride.

IV

THE MINSTER SPIRITS

"BEHOLD, ye builders, demigods who made
England's Walhalla, ye who haunt this pile
Of living stone ! behold us here defile
Behind this pall, winding through light and
shade
Of arch and pillar, where such bones are laid
As Time can only breed in one loved isle—
'Tis Tennyson we bring : he was erewhile
Our king," I said ; " we loved him undis-
mayed !"

Sorrow had fled ; for pride and joy of him
 Made Life seem Death—made Death seem
 Life's own life—
And more and more the mighty fane grew
 rife
With spirits mighty. Yet mine eyes grew dim
 For her who watch'd at Aldworth, that dear
 wife
He loved so well, when rose her loving hymn.

V

THE SILENT VOICES

SWEET was the sweet wife's music, and
 consoling :
The past returned : I heard the master's talk,
 That many a time in many a happy walk
I heard when through the whin of Aldworth
 strolling,

Or on the cliffs of Wight with billows rolling
Below the jaggy walls of gleaming chalk :
Again I saw him stay his giant-stalk
To watch the foamy-crested breakers shoaling.

And when the music ceased and pictures fled
I walked as in a dream around the grave,
And looked adown and saw the flowers out-
spread,
And spirit-voices spake from aisle and nave :—
“ To follow him be true, be pure, be brave :
Thou needest not his lyre,” the voices said.

VI

WHAT THE VOICES SAID

“ BEYOND the sun, beyond the furthest star,
Shines still the land which poets still may win
Whose poems are their lives—whose souls
within

Hold naught in dread save Art's high
conscience-bar—

Who have for muse a maiden free from scar—
Who know how beauty dies at touch of
sin—

Who love mankind, yet, having gods for kin,
Breathe, in Life's wood, zephyrs from climes
afar.

Heedless of phantom Fame—heedless of all
Save pity and love to light the life of
Man—

True poets work, winning a sunnier span
For Nature's martyr—Night's ancestral thrall :
True poets work, yet listen for the call
Bidding them join their country and their
clan."

OCTOBER 1892

COLERIDGE

I SEE thee pine like her in golden story

Who, in her prison, woke and saw, one
day,

The gates thrown open—saw the sunbeams
play,

With only a web 'tween her and summer's
glory ;

Who, when that web—so frail, so transitory,

It broke before her breath—had fallen
away,

Saw other webs and others rise for aye

Which kept her prisoned till her hair was
hoary.

Those songs half-sung that yet were all
divine—

That woke Romance, the queen, to reign
afresh—

Had been but preludes from that lyre of thine,
Could thy rare spirit's wings have pierced
the mesh

Spun by the wizard who compels the flesh,
But lets the poet see how heav'n can shine.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

THE TWO CHRISTMASTIDES

I

ON Winter's woof, which scarcely seems of
snow,

But hangs translucent, like a virgin's veil,
O'er headstone, monument, and guardian-
rail,

The New Year's sun shines golden—seems to
throw

Upon her coffin-flowers a greeting glow

From lands she loved to think on—seems to
trail

Love's holy radiance from the very Grail

O'er those white flowers before they sink below.

Is that a spirit or bird whose sudden song
From yonder sunlit tree beside the grave
Recalls a robin's warble, sweet yet strong,
Upon a lawn beloved of wind and wave—
Recalls her "Christmas Robin," ruddy,
brave,
Winning the crumbs she throws where black-
birds throng?

II

In Christmastide of heaven does *she* recall
Those happy days with Gabriel by the
sea,
Who gathered round him those he loved,
when she
"Must coax the birds to join the festival,"
And said, "The sea-sweet winds are musical
With carols from the billows singing free

Around the groynes, and every shrub and
tree

Seems conscious of the Channel's rise and
fall" ?

The coffin lowers, and I can see her now—

See the loved kindred standing by her side,
As once I saw them 'neath our Christmas
' bough—

And her, that dearer one, who sanctified
With halo of mother's love our Christmas-
tide—

And Gabriel too—with peace upon his brow.

TO A SLEEPER AT ROME

For the unveiling by Edmund Gosse of the
American memorial bust to the poet Keats in
Hampstead Parish Church, July 16, 1894.

THY gardens, bright with limbs of gods at
play—

Those bowers whose flowers are fruits,
Hesperian sweets

That light with heaven the soul of him who
eats,

And lend his veins Olympian blood of day—

Were only lent, and, since thou couldst not
stay,

Better to die than wake in sorrow, Keats,

Where even the Siren's song no longer
cheats—

Where Love's long "Street of Tombs" still
lengthens grey.

Better to nestle there in arms of Flora,

Ere Youth—the king of Earth and Beauty's
heir,

Drinking such breath in meadows of Aurora

As bards of morning drank, Ægean air—

Wake in old age's caverns of Ellora,

Carven with visions dead and sights that
were!

IN A GRAVEYARD

OLIVER MADOX BROWN

NOVEMBER 12, 1874

FAREWELL to thee, and to our dreams fare-
well—

Dreams of high deeds and golden days of
thine,

Where once again should Art's twin powers
combine—

The painter's wizard-wand, the poet's spell !
Though Death strikes free, careless of Heaven
and Hell—

Careless of Man, of Love's most lovely shrine ;
Yet must Man speak—must ask of Heaven a
sign

That this wild world is God's, and all is well.

Last night we mourned thee, cursing eyeless

Death,

Who, sparing sons of Baal and Ashtoreth,

Must needs slay thee, with all the world to

slay ;

But round this grave the winds of winter say :

“On earth what hath the poet ? An alien

breath.

Night holds the keys that ope the doors of

Day.”

TWO LETTERS TO A FRIEND

LETTER I.

AFTER THE WEDDING

BRIGHT-BROWED as Summer's self, who claspt
the land,

With eyes like English skies, where seemed
to play

Deep azure dreams behind the tender grey,
All light and love, she moved : I see her stand
Beneath that tree ; I see the happy band

Of bridesmaids on the lawn where blossoms
sway

In light so rare, it seems as if the day
Glowed conscious of the future's rosy
strand.

O Friend, if sun and wind and flowers and
birds,
In language deeper drawn than human words,
From deeper founts than Time shall e'er
destroy,
All spoke to thee in Summer's rich caress,
Even so my heart, though wordless too,
could bless ;
It could but feel a joy to know thy joy.

LETTER II.

AFTER DEATH'S MOCKERY

WHEN death from out the dark, by one blind
blow,
Strikes down Love's heart of hearts—severs
a life—
Cleaves it in twain as by a sudden knife,
Leaving the dreadful Present, dumb with woe,

Mocked by a Past, whose rainbow-skies aglow
O'erarch Love's bowers, where all his flowers
seem rife

In bloom of one sweet loving girl and wife—
Then Friendship's voice must whisper, whisper
low.

Though well I know 'tis thou who dost inherit
Heroic blood and faith that lends the spirit
Strength known to souls like thine, of noblest
strain,

Comfort I dare not proffer. What relief
Shall Friendship proffer Love in such wild
grief?

I can but suffer pain to know thy pain :

I can but suffer pain ; and yet to me
Returns that day whose light seemed heavenly
light,

Whose breath seemed incense rising to unite
That lawn—where every flower and bird and
bee

Seemed loving her who shone beneath that
tree—

With lawns far off, whose flowers of higher
delight,

Beyond Death's icy peaks and fens of night,
Bloomed 'neath a heaven her eyes, not ours,
could see.

Brother, did Nature mock us with that glory
Which seemed to prophesy Love's rounded
story?

Or was it that sweet Summer's fond device
To show thee who shall stand on Eden slopes,
Where bloom the broken buds of earthly
hopes—

Stand waiting 'neath a tree of Paradise?

ANCESTRAL MEMORY

THE DEAF AND DUMB SON OF CRÆSUS

He saw their spears who scaled the parapet,

Then—pouring, glittering, with a torrent's
force,

Through battered gates—the spears ! With-
out remorse

He struck, he slew, round Cræsus sore beset.

He heard not Slaughter's din, but felt her
sweat

And smelt her breath where many a bloody
corse,

Trampled by Persian camel, Lydian horse,
Showed how at Sardis Fate and Cræsus met.

But when he saw his father down at last—

Down, waiting death at some fierce foeman's
stroke—

Louder the dumb boy shrieked than Winter's
blast :

“Man, kill not Cræsus !”

'Twas the Race that spoke :

The blood of Lydian Kings within him woke
Ancestral memory—woke the sceptred Past.

APOLLO IN PARIS

TO THE FRENCH ACADEMY ON THE ELECTION
OF M. J. M. DE HÉRÉDIA

I

SPIRES, roofs, and towers gleam in the sunset's
glow

Till Paris burns like some old poet-town

That draws Apollo's radiant presence down

By music mounting from his sons below :

Methinks he greets you, fearless men who know

His sons and guard them, lest their sire's
renown

Be dimmed when bastard fingers clutch the
crown

Of him, our Lord of light and lyre and bow.

As when he scared the hordes who sacked old
Rome

That day he soared above his temple-dome
When gods were fleeing the voices of the
Vandals,

I see him now whose song keeps heaven
immortal ;

I see him now : he shines above your portal,
Phœbus from golden curls to golden
sandals !

II

With limbs of light I see the song-god stand
Flushing your roof ! He knows your hands
are strong

Against his foes, the brazen-throated throng,
Whose breath is blight to beauty in every
land ;

“ Foes of my foes,” saith he, “ who dare with-
stand

The great coarse voice that works my
children wrong,

Ye crown Hérédia with the crown of song
Heedless of all save Art’s divine command !

He sings the past—the beauty that hath been :
I love him, I—remembering those bright
days

Before the world grew grey of Vandal haze,
When gods might mix with men of godlike
mien

And maids with lovesome eyes of mortal
sheen,

Sweet goddesses of earth with Woman’s
ways :

III

I love the song-born poet, for that he
Loves only song—seeks for love's sake alone
Shy Poesie, whose dearest bowers, unknown
To feudaries of Fame, are known to me."
So saith the god, in tones which seem to be
That music of the sunset richly blown
When sinks the sun-god from his sinking
throne

Within the burnished bosom of the sea.

He soars away, a star in rosy air ;
But see ! the memory of his presence there
Lives where he stood. Yea, though a god
hath fled,
Leaving a fading memory scarce beholden,
A true god's very shadow glimmers golden
With lovelier light than mortal brows can
shed.

ENVOY.

The poet sings what Nature, dreaming, saith,
But still his Bride is Art—that starry
wife

From shores where music of the gods is
rife.

She teaches him the strain that conquereth,
Whether he touch the lyre, or breathe his
breath

Through flute of Phœbus or through Pan's
wild fife—

Whether of Man he sings or Nature's life,
Or shining sword beyond the dykes of death.

Yet, though he asks but this, the Bride's
acclaim—

Though not Fame's trumpet nor the wreath of
Fame

Can give the bridegroom joy whose Bride is
Art—

He grieves when bastard-brows are crowned
with flowers,

And Helicon grows noisier than a mart—

Remembering Poesie within her bowers.

AT THE THÉÂTRE FRANÇAIS

ON THE REVIVAL, AFTER FIFTY YEARS, OF "LE
ROI S'AMUSE"

NOVEMBER 22, 1882

POET of pity and scourge of sceptred crime—

Titan of light, with scarce the gods for
peers—

What thoughts come to thee through the
mist of years,

There sitting calm, master of Fate and Time?

Homage from every tongue, from every
clime,

In place of gibes, fills now thy satiate ears.

Mine own heart swells, mine eyelids prick
with tears

In very pride of thee, old man sublime !

And thou, the mother who bore him, beauteous
France,

Round whose fair limbs what web of sorrow
is spun !—

I see thee lift thy tear-stained countenance—

Victress by many a victory he hath won ;

I hear thy voice o'er winds of Fate and Chance

Say to the conquered world : “ Behold my
son ! ”

TO MADAME CARNOT *

AT Dijon gleamed on that bright countenance—

Illumed by love of thee and love of those
Who sprang from thee—tears born of
coming woes.

The sad prophetic Spirit of joyous France
Wept too, methinks, to see her son advance

* “When the President reached Dijon he had the happiness to find awaiting him on the railway platform his son, the lieutenant, and his daughter and son-in-law, with their little daughter, a sweet child of four. The grandfather took her into his carriage, and embraced her affectionately, and said how much more pleasant it would be to get out and stay at Dijon with her than to go on to Lyons. His eyes filled with tears as he gave her the parting kiss, and handed her to her father.”—*DAILY NEWS*, June 25, 1894.

To death ; and when he kissed the child
there rose

That sight the Future's mirror sometimes
shows,

The mother-land in grip of Fate or Chance.

" Daughter," saith France to thee, " this day of
sorrow

Wins for his threatened land a sunnier
morrow :

His was the death could save me—not
another :

For me thy dear one robbed thee of his life—

For me fought, bosom bare—yea, met the knife

Hell whetted for the bosom of his Mother."

THE LAST WALK FROM BOAR'S HILL

TO A. C. S.

I

ONE after one they go ; and glade and heath,
Where once we walked with them, and
garden-bowers
They made so dear, are haunted by the
hours
Once musical of those who sleep beneath ;
One after one does Sorrow's every wreath
Bind closer you and me with funeral flowers,
And Love and Memory from each loss of
ours
Forge conquering glaives to quell the conqueror
Death.

Since Love and Memory now refuse to yield
The friend with whom we walk through mead
and field

To-day as on that day when last we parted,
Can he be dead, indeed, whatever seem ?
Love shapes a presence out of Memory's
dream,
A living presence, Jowett golden-hearted.

II

Can he be dead ? We walk through flowery
ways

From Boar's Hill down to Oxford, fain to
know

What nugget-gold, in drift of Time's long
flow,

The Bodleian mine hath stored from richer
days ;

He, fresh as on that morn, with sparkling
gaze,
Hair bright as sunshine, white as moonlit
snow,
Still talks of Plato while the scene below
Breaks gleaming through the veil of sunlit
haze.

Can he be dead? He shares our homeward
walk,
And by the river you arrest the talk
To see the sun transfigure ere he sets
The boatmen's children shining in the wherry
And on the floating bridge the ply-rope
wets,
Making the clumsy craft an angel's ferry.

III

The river crossed, we walk 'neath glowing
skies

Through grass where cattle feed or stand
and stare

With burnished coats, glassing the coloured
air—

Fading as colour after colour dies :

We pass the copse ; we round the leafy
rise—

Start many a coney and partridge, hern and
hare ;

We win the scholar's nest—his simple fare
Made royal-rich by welcome in his eyes.

Can he be dead ? His heart was drawn to
you.

Ah ! well that kindred heart within him
knew

The poet's heart of gold that gives the spell!
Can he be dead? Your heart being drawn to
him,
How shall ev'n Death make that dear presence
dim
For you who loved him—us who loved him
well?

THE OCTOPUS OF THE GOLDEN
ISLES

“What! Will they even strike at *me*?”

ROUND many an Isle of Song, in seas serene,
With many a swimmer strove the poet-boy,
Yet strove in love: their strength, I say,
was joy

To him, my friend—dear friend of godlike
mien!

But soon he felt beneath the billowy green
A monster moving—moving to destroy:
Limb after limb became the tortured toy
Of coils that clung and lips that stung
unseen.

"And canst thou strike ev'n me?" the swimmer
said,

As rose above the waves the deadly eyes,
Arms flecked with mouths that hissed in
hellish wise,

Quivering in hate around a hateful head.—

I saw him fight old Envy's sorceries :
I saw him sink : the man I loved is dead !

LOVE HOLDS OF HEAVEN IN FEE

AT A FUNERAL

I

THESE tears, as down the slope Death's pageant
wends—

These tears, whence come they—tears I
cannot smother?

Is it for thee they flow, my brother's brother?
Is it for him they flow, or these dear friends?

My thoughts are far away where water bends
Around a grange—my thoughts are with
that other

Who held thee—yea, ere thou couldst babble
“Mother,”

Who holds thee still by strength that never
ends.

She holds thee—she who, like the mother-
dove,

Draws near her nestlings only to caress,
Whose love for thee, for them, boundless,
above

All other wealth of Woman's tenderness,
Is not their dower alone : its boon can bless
All eyes which see that mother's eyes of love.

II

She holds thee still : Love holds of heaven in
fee :

Still lives that face where Nature seemed to
write

Life's twin-ancestral story in mingled light
On lips whose smile was hers of love or glee,
In eyes whose pictures from the blue-grey sea,
Radiant of laughter, radiant in despite

Of shadowy bars from lashes dark as night,
Seemed like a sailor's memory haunting thee.

She holds thee still ; Death dares not dim that
face

Rich with the runes of each historic race,

Where, like the message of an olden scroll
Deep-glimmering in a priceless palimpsest,
The language of the past seemed half-exprest
Beneath the scriptures of a new-lit soul.

THE WOOD-HAUNTER'S DREAM

THE wild things loved me, but a wood-sprite
said :

“Though meads are sweet when flowers at
morn uncurl,

And woods are sweet with nightingale and
merle,

Where are the dreams that flush'd thy childish
bed ?

The Spirit of the Rainbow thou wouldst wed !”

I rose, I found her—found a rain-drench'd
girl

Whose eyes of azure and limbs like roseate
pearl

Coloured the rain above her golden head.

But when I stood by that sweet vision's side

I saw no more the Rainbow's lovely stains ;

To her by whom the glowing heavens were
dyed

The sun showed naught but dripping woods
and plains :

"God gives the world the Rainbow, her the
rains,"

The wood-sprite laugh'd, "our seeker finds a
bride."

MIDSHIPMAN LANYON

“Midshipman Lanyon refused to leave the Admiral and perished.”—TIMES, *June* 30, 1893.

OUR tears are tears of pride who see thee
stand,

Watching the great bows dip, the stern
uprear,

Beside thy chief, whose hope was still to
steer,

Though Fate had said, “Ye shall not win the
land !”

What joy was thine to answer each command

From him calamity had made more dear,

Save that which bade thee part when Death
drew near,

Till Tryon sank with Lanyon at his hand !

Death only and doom are sure: they come,
they rend,

But still the fight we make can crown us
great:

Life hath no joy like his who fights with
Fate

Shoulder to shoulder with a stricken friend:

Proud are our tears for thee, most fortunate,
Whose day, so brief, had such heroic end.

A REMINISCENCE OF THE OPEN-AIR
PLAYS *

TO PIERROT IN LOVE

THE CLOWN WHOSE KISSES TURNED A CRONE
TO A FAIRY-QUEEN

WHAT dost thou here, in Love's enchanted wood,
Pierrot, who once wert safe as clown and
thief—

Held safe by love of fun and wine and food—
From her who follows love of Woman,
Grief—

* Epilogue for the open-air performance of Banville's "Le Baiser," in which Lady Archibald Campbell took the part of "Pierrot" and Miss Annie Schletter the part of the "Fairy."—COOMBE, *August 9, 1889.*

Her who, of old, stalked over Eden-grass
Behind Love's baby-feet—whose shadow
threw

On every brook, as on a magic glass,
Prophetic shapes of what should come to pass
When tears got mixt with Paradisal dew?

Kisses are loved but for the lips that kiss :
Thine have restored a princess to her throne,
Breaking the spell which barred from fairy
bliss

A fay and shrank her to a wrinkled crone ;
But, if thou dream'st that thou from Pantomime
Shalt clasp an angel of the mystic moon—
Clasp her on banks of Love's own rose and
thyme,
While woodland warblers ring the nuptial-
chime—

Bottom to thee were but a meek buffoon.

When yonder fairy, long ago, was told

The spell which caught her in malign eclipse,
Turning her radiant body foul and old,

Would yield to some knight-errant's virgin
lips,

And when, through many a weary day and
night,

She, wondering who the paladin would be
Whose kiss should charm her from her grievous
plight,

Pictured a-many princely heroes bright,

Dost thou suppose she ever pictured thee ?

'Tis true the mischief of the foeman's charm

Yielded to thee—to that first kiss of thine.

We saw her tremble—lift a rose-wreath arm,

Which late, all veined and shrivelled, made
her pine ;

We saw her fingers rise and touch her cheek,

As if the morning breeze across the wood,
Which lately seemed to strike so chill and
bleak

Through all the wasted body, bent and weak,
Were light and music now within her blood.

'Tis true thy kiss made all her form expand—
Made all the skin grow smooth and pure as
pearl,

Till there she stood, tender, yet tall and
grand,

A queen of Faëry yet a lovesome girl,
Within whose eyes—whose wide, new-litten
eyes—

New litten by thy kiss's re-creation—
Expectant joy that yet was wild surprise
Made all her flesh like light of summer skies
When dawn lies dreaming of the morn's
carnation.

But when thou saw'st the breaking of the spell

Within whose grip of might her soul had
pined,

Like some sweet butterfly that breaks the cell

In which its purple pinions slept confined,
And when thou heard'st the strains of elfin song
Her sisters sang from rainbow cars above

her—

Didst thou suppose that she, though prisoned
long,

And freed at last by thee from all the wrong,

Must for that kiss take Harlequin for lover?

Hearken, sweet fool! Though Banville carried
thee

To lawns where love and song still share
the sward

Beyond the golden river few can see

And fewer still, in these grey days, can ford;

And though he bade the wings of Passion fan
Thy face, till every line grows bright and
human,
Feathered thy spirit's wing for wider span,
And fired thee with the fire that comes to man
When first he plucks the rose of Nature,
Woman;

And though our actress gives thee that sweet
gaze

Where spirit and matter mingle in liquid
blue—

That face, where pity through the frolic
plays—

That form, whose lines of light Love's pencil
drew—

That voice, whose music seems a new caress

Whenever passion makes a new transition
From key to key of joy or quaint distress—

That sigh, when, now, thy fairy's loveliness
Leaves thee alone to mourn Love's vanished
vision :

Still art thou Pierrot—naught but Pierrot ever ;

For is not this the very word of Fate :

“No mortal, clown or king, shall e'er dis sever

His present glory from his past estate” ?

Yet be thou wise and dry those foolish tears ;

The clown's first kiss was needed, not the
clown,

By her who, fired by hopes and chilled by fears,

Sought but a kiss like thine for years on years :

Be wise, I say, and wander back to town.

LECONTE DE LISLE

JULY 17, 1894

A REMINISCENCE OF THE JUBILEE REVIVAL
OF "LE ROI S'AMUSE" NOVEMBER 22, 1882

WHERE'ER thou art, canst thou forget that night

When, after fifty years, the victory came,

And Hugo—throned above all thrones of

Fame—

Watched his own mighty dream uncoil its
might,

And thou didst stand with shining locks of white

And eyes that, answering our proud hearts'
acclaim,

Lost all their arrowy mockeries, and became

Dim with the tears that made their lashes
bright?

Nirvana was thy quest ! But love like thine

For that great soul must bear thy kindled
soul

Where Love's high-chosen constellations shine

Of stars unmingled with the "loveless
Whole" :

When love hath coloured life with hues divine,

What poet seeks Nirvana's hueless goal ?

TO BRITAIN AND AMERICA

ON THE DEATH OF JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

YE twain who long forgot your brotherhood
And those far fountains whence, through
glorious years,

Your fathers drew, for Freedom's pioneers,
Your English speech, your dower of English
blood—

Ye ask to-day, in sorrow's holiest mood,
When all save love seems film—ye ask in
tears—

“How shall we honour him whose name
endears

The footprints where belovèd Lowell stood?”

Your hands he joined—those fratricidal hands,
Once trembling, each, to seize a brother's
throat :

How shall ye honour him whose spirit stands
Between you still?—Keep Love's bright
sails afloat,
For Lowell's sake, where once ye strove and
smote

On waves that must unite, not part, your
strands.

TO MRS. GARFIELD

ON THE DEATH OF THE PRESIDENT

SUCH strength as his, striving in such a strife,
Will win at last : God gave thy dear one
all :

A seat above the conflict, power to call
Peace like a Zephyr, when alarms were rife ;
Home music too, children and heroine wife,
God gave : then gave Death's writing on the
wall,

And on the road the assassin : bade him
fall,

Death-stricken at the shining crest of Life.

And yet our tears are sweet. God bade him
taste

All gifts of heav'n, like manna raining
down—

Clothed him with Good for Might, whose
sweet renown

Touched Ocean's lyre to music as it passed ;
Then crowned him thine indeed—giving at last
Pain suffered well,—thy Garfield's deathless
crown.

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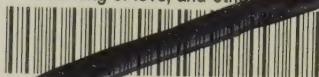
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